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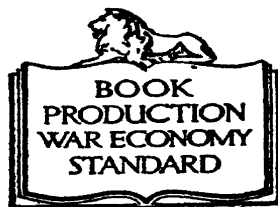


edited by

J. WENTWORTH DAY

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By
VICTOR BRIDGES



FULL-BACK FOR ENGLAND

Very quietly the long reeds that hedged the Oke-stock football field were parted aside, and a face peered cautiously through, taking a long and careful survey of the immediate neighbourhood. The face belonged to Mr. William Yard, known to his more intimate friends in London as "Pills," and to the police as one of the most daring and successful burglars of the day.

A reason for Mr. Yard's prudence was not hard to find: the briefest glance at his khaki-coloured clothes, plentifully dotted with broad-arrows, made it quite evident that for the time, at all events, any form of publicity would be painful to him.

The fact was that on the previous afternoon Mr. Yard had accomplished the remarkable feat of escaping from Dartmoor. An unexpected mist sweeping down over the granite-studded hillside where he was at work had suddenly inspired him with the idea of making a dash for liberty. Without further thought he had flung down his spade and bolted into its shelter, before either of the nearest warders had been able to stop him. It is true that a couple of charges of buckshot had whistled by, unpleasantly close to

his legs, but they had only served to add to his already useful turn of speed. By the time the other convicts had been collected, and the mist had lifted sufficiently for the warders to see what they were doing, Mr. Yard was some two miles away in the opposite direction from which he had started, safely hidden in a small plantation that fringed the main road to Okestock.

Here he had stayed until nightfall, expecting any minute to be routed out by a party of pursuing warders. No-one had turned up, however, his ingenious idea of throwing a circle while the mist still concealed him having apparently put them temporarily off the scent.

Under cover of darkness he had stolen from his hiding place, and, following the main road at a judicious distance, tramped doggedly on mile after mile, until the lights of Okestock some hundred feet below him had shown him that he had reached the boundaries of the moor.

Utterly dead beat, he had felt tempted to throw himself down on the open heather and snatch a few hours' rest. But the dread of discovery had urged him on, and, clambering cautiously down the hill-side, he had made his way along the deserted road until he had reached the wire fence which bounded the Okestock football ground. Here a stray gleam of moonlight coming out between the clouds had shown him the patch of long, reedy grass behind the goal-posts. With a last effort he had crept into its shelter, and dropped almost instantly into a profound sleep.

It was the sun which had woken him up eventually, a bright yellow winter sun shining down out of a sky of cloudless blue. For a moment Mr. Yard had rubbed his eyes and stared at it with amazement; then with a sudden shock he had remembered he was no longer a guest of the Government. He had tried to scramble up, but his numbed limbs had refused to support him, and with a groan he had fallen back again, feeling rather like a trapped rabbit waiting the arrival of the keeper.

A few minutes' energetic rubbing, however, had been sufficient to restore both his circulation and his confidence, and it was then that he had pulled aside the reeds and peered out in the discreet manner already described.

The first thing that met his eyes was the football pavilion, a small wooden building on the left of the ground. Instantly the possibilities of a change of clothes jumped into his mind.

"There's bound to be some clobber kicking about in there," he muttered to himself. "Wonder if I can get in without bein' nabbed?"

That, as Hamlet would have said, was the question. The public road, as he remembered from last night, ran right alongside the ground, and, to judge by the sun, the time was already past ten o'clock. Still, it was no good lying like a hunted rat among the reeds. It was a case of neck or nothing, and Mr. Yard was not the man to fail at a crisis.

Licking his blue lips, he raised himself to a

crouching position, and then, with a care which would have done credit to a boy scout, elevated his head above the top of the reeds.

So far as he could see in each direction, the road was empty. Hesitating no longer, he crept out from his hiding-place, and, bending almost double, covered the distance between the goal and the pavilion in almost the same time that it takes to read these words.

The door was in front, facing the field; but Mr. Yard did not trouble about this recognised means of entrance. He hurried round to the back, where he found a small window just large enough to admit a man's body. It was shut, of course; but this was a trifling obstacle to a gentleman of his experience. In about half a minute he had forced it open, and, pulling himself up by the sill, scrambled through and dropped on to the floor.

He found himself in a small matchboarded apartment, set round with wooden lockers. There were also various pegs from which were suspended one or two mud-stained jerseys and sweaters, an old great-coat, and a couple of pairs of blue football shorts distinctly the worse for wear.

To Mr. Yard's eyes, however, they were more welcome and attractive than the flowers in May. Stripping himself of his broad-arrowed costume with feverish rapidity, he hastily arrayed himself in the somewhat less conspicuous costume of a British footballer, minus the stockings and boots. A hurried search through the lockers revealed both these

luxuries, with the aid of which he promptly proceeded to complete his outfit.

"Lor!" he chuckled, surveying himself with satisfaction in the broken bit of looking-glass that hung from the wall. "I never thought I should be wearin' footer kit again. It's like old days!"

There was no time for sentiment, however, and Mr. Yard was not slow in realising the fact. Grabbing the greatcoat from its peg, he was just about to make for the window, when a sudden shout outside brought him to an abrupt halt.

"Hallo, Tubby!" sang out a cheery voice.

Like a cat Mr. Yard stole to the window. Some thirty yards away a young man with a bag in his hand was advancing towards the pavilion across the next field.

Swiftly and noiselessly the convict crossed the floor to the other side of the apartment, and peeped through a crack in the boards. Another young man with another bag in his hand was approaching from the roadway.

Mr. Yard swore, softly but fervently.

"Pipped!" he said; "pipped on the post!"

For a second he hesitated, and then returning to the spot where he had dressed, picked up his late garments and stuffed them into one of the lockers and shut the lid.

Having done this he sat down and waited events.

"I've got the key, Tubby!" called out the same aggressively jovial voice.

"Right-oh!" responded the other, "D'you know this bally window's open?"

There was a grating in the lock.

"That's that old ass Smith again!" said the cheerful voice. "I told him to shut it."

Mr. Yard rose to his feet. If he had to be captured he would at least enjoy the memory of one really magnificent scrap. There was a sharp click, a bump, and then the door swung open.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the young man with the bag.

"Hallo!" returned Mr. Yard coolly.

The new-comer stared at him for a moment in amazement, and then, with a sudden smile, put down his bag and advanced towards him.

"Mr. Logan, I suppose," he said. "This is awfully good of you. I'd just made up my mind we should have to play one short."

He put out his hand, which Mr. Yard grasped and shook heartily.

At that moment the other young man entered.

"This is Logan, 'Tubby!" exclaimed the first. "He's turned up, after all."

"Good man!" exclaimed Tubby. "But how the dickens did you get in?"

"Through the window," explained Mr. Yard truthfully.

"That's the style," laughed the other. "Damned rude of Jack not to have been here to receive you. I suppose you came over in Sam's cart?"

Mr. Yard, who was trying desperately hard to get his bearings, contented himself with a nod.

"Well, I'm most awf'ly obliged to you for turning up," said Jack. "Old Morton had heard you were at Rundlestone, and suggested my sending you a wire first thing this morning, when Collins cried off. I never thought you'd be able to come."

"It was just chance," admitted Mr. Yard frankly. "I got away unexpected."

"We're jolly glad to see you, anyhow," broke in Tubby. "The Battery are sending over a beastly hot team, and we should have been absolutely snookered without a back."

Mr. Yard suppressed a start. In more innocent days, before the stern career of burglary had claimed him for its own, he had figured as a full-back of some local renown for a famous Midland club. And now apparently it was in the same capacity that he was being so hospitably received by these two unsuspecting young men. Who the missing Logan might be he could only guess. Evidently some well-known player who was staying in the district, and had been invited over to assist Okestock at the eleventh hour. "If he turns up," thought Mr. Yard, "things'll be a bit hot."

His reflections were broken in upon by Jack.

"These morning matches are the deuce, you know, Logan. Half our fellows are in business, and it's a rare job to get a team together."

"One can't always get off when one wants to,"

said Mr. Yard sympathetically; "I've found that meself."

"I shouldn't have taken them on," continued the other, stripping off his shirt, and groping in his bag for a jersey, "if it hadn't been that they're leaving Plymouth on Friday. The Colonel was very keen to have a cut at us first, as we haven't been beaten this year. The old beggar thought he'd catch us on the hop if he could fix up a mid-week match. He'll be awfully sick when he finds you're playing for us. I expect there are a lot of people after you when you're on a holiday, aren't there?"

"Quite enough," confessed Mr. Yard.

A sudden sound of laughter and voices outside became audible, and Tubby, walking to the door flung it open.

"Here are the others!" he said.

Some seven or eight young fellows, most of them already changed, came straggling across the field. When they saw Tubby at the door they raised a cheerful "Coo-ee!"

"The Campbells are coming!" called out one.

The words had hardly left his lips when a big brake, packed with men, rumbled along the road and drew up at the entrance to the ground.

As the soldiers were disembarking themselves, Mr. Yard was being introduced to the new arrivals on his own side. On every hand he was greeted with the warmest of welcomes.

"I saw you play a couple of years ago," said

one youngster admiringly. "My word, you were in form! Hadn't you a moustache then, by the way?"

Mr. Yard nodded.

"I had it shaved off last year," he said.

By this time the slightly mistaken impression as to his identity had become public property, and the visitors, who had all arrived in their footer kit, were standing about viewing him with mingled expressions of curiosity and respect.

The Colonel, who had brought the Battery over, a jolly-looking, fat old man with a white moustache, came up and introduced himself.

"Glad to have the chance of seeing you play, Mr. Logan," he said, "but it's a low-down trick of young Mortimer here roping you in. We weren't expecting to run up against an International full-back."

"You'll run up against him all right," interrupted Jack, with a laugh. "That's what he's here for."

Mr. Yard, who was beginning to get a little nervous about his growing reputation, smiled uneasily. He had not played for at least five years, and although, thanks to the healthy limitations of Dartmoor, he was in excellent condition, he could not help feeling grave doubts as to whether he would be able to live up to Mr. Logan's formidable fame. However, there was nothing to do now but to go through with it.

Tubby, fully changed, came running out from the pavilion with a ball, followed by several other members of the team.

"Here you are," he sang out, passing it to Yard; "have a shot at goal!"

The convict caught the leather, and somehow or other the once-familiar feel of it restored his waning spirits. Taking a couple of short steps, he sent it soaring away towards the goal, a beautiful drop-kick that only fell short of the crossbar by a couple of inches.

"Bravo!" shouted Jack, gazing after it admiringly. "What do you think of that, Colonel?"

"Too damned good altogether!" grunted the old soldier. "I shall take my boys back to barracks if he does it again."

There was a general laugh, cut short by a sharp whistle from the referee.

The two sides lined up. As far as looks went they seemed fairly equally matched, the superior weight and strength of the soldiers in the scrum being pretty well counter-balanced by the youth and speedy appearance of the Okestock three-quarters and halves.

From the solitary glory of his position at full-back, Mr. Yard cast a critical eye over his opponents. A tall, fair-haired man who was playing on the right wing seemed especially to rivet his attention.

"Who's that chap?" he asked Tubby, as the latter fell back in preparation for the kick-off.

"Private Buckle," answered the latter, glancing in the direction he indicated. "You'll have to look out for him; he's about their best man."

The full-back smiled unpleasantly.

"I'll look out for him all right," he answered.

For eighteen months Mr. Yard had been under the immediate charge of a warder of the same name, whose striking resemblance to the tall three-quarter proclaimed their relationship beyond doubt.

Mr. Yard spat on his hands.

"I only hope they're twins," he said to himself.

Another sharp whistle, a general movement forward amongst the line of stalwart soldiers, and the ball came soaring through the air straight into Tubby's hands. The game had started.

For the first ten minutes the play remained more or less confined to the centre of the ground. The Oke-stock forwards, settling down quicker than their adversaries, were more than holding their own in the scrum, and only the very keen tackling of the soldier three-quarters prevented Tubby and his companions from coming away with the ball.

At last the former got his chance. Taking a swift pass from the half, he cut right through the opposition line, and dashed off down the field, with only the back between himself and the goal. As the latter leaped at him, he transferred the ball neatly to Jack, who was racing along a yard and a half to his left. Catching it in his stride, that genial young man swerved round the disgruntled soldier, and, galloping over the line, placed it fair and square between the goal-posts.

Picking it up again, he leisurely retraced his steps. Some twenty yards out he halted, and beckoned to Mr. Yard.

"Will you take the kick, Logan?" he shouted.

Mr. Yard modestly shook his head.

"Oh, but you must!" protested three or four of the others. "We've all heard about your goal-kicking."

The whole field was waiting, and, seeing that there was no help for it, Mr. Yard strode reluctantly forward.

"Where would you like it?" enquired Jack.

"Oh, any old place!" answered the unhappy convict. "This'll do."

He viciously dug out a hole with his heel. Jack, carefully poising the ball in his hands, stretched himself out full length, and a painful moment of silence prevailed over the field.

Mr. Yard retired two or three steps.

"Down!" he cried hoarsely; and, then, running forward, hacked at the ball with amazing ferocity. Up it flew high over the crossbar, and, describing a graceful curve in the air, settled down in the next field.

There was a wild outburst of applause from the delighted Okestock team; and Mr. Yard, mopping his forehead with his sleeve, retired to his former position.

"If I hadn't have said to myself it was a warder's head," he muttered, "I'd never have done it."

The game was resumed even more vigorously than before. Determined to draw level, the soldiers hurled themselves into their task with unsparing energy, and their extra weight and strength in the scrum began to tell its tale.

On one occasion four stalwart privates broke right

through the Okestock pack, and came thundering down the field with the ball at their feet. A score seemed certain, but Mr. Yard, whose arduous training as a burglar had taught him the value of strategy, saved the situation. Just as the quartette were drawing up to him, he suddenly rasped out in excellent imitation of a drill-sergeant the one magic word: "Halt!"

His opponents instinctively checked themselves, and, before they could recover, Mr. Yard had flung himself at the ball and with a flying kick sent it hurtling into touch.

He was surprised, and for a moment alarmed, at the indignation which his ingenious idea provoked among its immediate victims. All four of them were appealing angrily to the referee, who, speechless with laughter, could only shake his head and sign to them to proceed.

It was not until Mr. Yard realised that even the other members of the opposing team were hugely enjoying their companions' discomfiture that his fear lest he should have given himself away completely vanished.

"Git on with the game, ye fat'eads," roared the burly corporal who was skippering the team. Then, turning to Jack, he added admiringly: "'Ot stuff! That's what 'e is—'ot stuff!"

Jack, who was struggling between mirth and amazement, thought it wiser to say nothing. A moment later, however, finding himself alongside of Tubby, he whispered hurriedly:

" I say, that was a bit thick, wasn't it? "

Tubby grinned.

The soldiers' revenge was not long in coming. From the line-out one of them caught the ball, and flung it back to the tall, fair-haired three-quarter, who was standing unmarked. In a moment the latter had cut through and was galloping along the touch-line towards the Okestock goal.

With a grunt of joy, Mr. Yard came hurrying across, and leaped at his quarry like a tiger at a stag. In the splendour of his emotions, however, he committed the unpardonable error of going a shade too high.

The soldier's muscular hand shot out, and, catching his assailant fair and square under the chin, sent him spinning backwards on the grass. Then, amidst roars of delight from his companions, he ran round and deposited the ball half-way between the goal-posts.

Mr. Yard sat up and looked after him.

" You swine! " he said softly. " You wait! "

Jack and Tubby came hurrying up.

" Not hurt, Logan, are you? " inquired the former anxiously.

" Only in me feelings! " answered Mr. Yard.

Tubby laughed.

" Well, it's a new sensation for you to miss anyone! " he said, as they walked back towards the goal. " I always thought Buckle was a pretty stiff proposition; now I'm sure."

Mr. Yard made no audible answer. To himself, however, he remarked bitterly: "He'll be stiffer still before I've done with him."

A successful place-kick put the two sides level, and immediately afterwards the whistle went for half-time.

When they resumed Mr. Yard had quite recovered from the effects of his tumble. He was standing in his place, luxuriously pondering over his next meeting with Private Buckle, when he suddenly observed a telegraph-boy opening the gate which led into the field.

Great minds work quickly. In a flash, Mr. Yard realised his danger. It was a hundred to one that the missing Logan had wired to explain his absence.

Casting a hasty glance at the game, which gave no sign of requiring his immediate services, he hurried down to the touch-line and held out his hand.

"For Mr. Mortimer, sir," said the lad.

"All right, my son," answered Mr. Yard pleasantly. "I'll give it him."

The boy handed over the yellow envelope, and then slowly began to retrace his steps, walking backwards and keeping a longing eye on the game. His own inclinations, fortunately for Mr. Yard, were at variance with the Government's views as to how long a telegraph-boy might take over a message, and, seeing that the full-back had had no opportunity as yet of passing on the wire, he at length vanished round the corner, unsuspecting as to its ultimate delivery.

It was not until he had completely disappeared that Mr. Yard opened the envelope.

"Sorry can't play to-day. Away last night; only just received letter.—LOGAN."

The convict barely had time to master the message when a sudden shout of "Look out, there!" recalled him abruptly to his environment.

The soldiers' three-quarters were in full movement; the ball travelling neatly up the line towards the right wing.

It finally came to rest in the hands of Private Buckle, who, avoiding the well-meant but somewhat belated attentions of Jack, came racing away down the touch-line.

Mr. Yard almost sobbed with pleasure.

He darted across the ground, timing his arrival to perfection. The three-quarter saw him coming, and, shifting the ball to his right arm, prepared to repeat his successful hand-off. But, like many other good intentions, his purpose was destined never to bear fruit.

Dropping his bullet head, Mr. Yard propelled himself through the air on the lines of a Whitehead torpedo, and with an appalling crash the two men hurtled to the ground and rolled over, locked in each other's arms.

"Gad, what a tackle!" roared Jack, as the ball, after leaping high into the air, dropped safely into touch.

Mr. Yard was the first to rise. In that exquisite

moment he seemed to have worked off all the bottled resentment of eighteen soul-searing months.

"Hope you're not hurt?" he grinned, extending a hand to the unfortunate Buckle, who lay on the ground gasping like a recently landed salmon.

The latter accepted it, and scrambled painfully to his feet.

"'Urt!" he stammered ironically. "Ho n-n-no, I ain't 'urt! I shouldn't a' known you'd c-c-collared me if you 'adn't mentioned it."

There was a general laugh, which the corporal capped by inquiring gravely:

"You don't 'appen to be wanting a job as a six-inch shell, I s'pose, Mr. Logan? We could do with a few more."

Mr. Yard shook his head.

"I've had enough o' working for the Government!" he remarked dryly.

Only ten minutes more remained for play, and the fun became fast and furious. Both sides laid themselves out to score, magnificently indifferent to anything approaching defensive tactics. On one occasion Jack was hurled into touch when only a couple of feet from the soldiers' line, while, on another, nothing but an untimely stumble on the part of the big corporal prevented that gentleman from dribbling over and touching down.

It was left to Mr. Yard to put the crowning touch on the day's work. One minute from time, the Battery's full-back picked up the ball in front of his own

goal, and took a huge punt straight up the field. It dropped right into the hands of the convict, who was standing in a line with the centre flag.

The rushing forwards paused to give him five yards' law, and Mr. Yard gripped the occasion with commendable promptness.

Instead of kicking, he suddenly launched himself forward right into the thick of his waiting adversaries. In a moment he had bullocked his way through, his sudden run taking the opposition utterly by surprise.

There was a roar of "Collar him!" and from both sides the halves and three-quarters came thundering in to cut off his advance. Mr. Yard took in the situation at a glance. In a flash he had measured the distance between himself and the goal, and then, dropping the ball, sent it soaring away with a terrific kick straight for the bar.

There was a moment of painful silence. The ball pitched fair and square bang on the centrepiece, bounded up into the air, and then trickled gently over on the further side.

A howl of joy from the Okestock team, a shrill whistle from the referee and the game was over.

Mr. Yard found himself surrounded by a throng of his fellow-players, each endeavouring to outvie the other in compliments and gratitude. With a sudden inspiration, he thrust his way through, and made a dash for the pavilion. It could not have been more than forty-five seconds before the foremost of his laughing

pursuers ran in after him, but that priceless interval had not been wasted. In Mr. Yard's breeches pocket reposed practically the entire stock of loose cash which had previously enriched the hanging line of waistcoats and trousers.

"I must be off!" he said hastily, picking up his adopted coat and cap.

"Oh, hang it all!" cried Jack. "I was going to suggest that you should come back and have some lunch with us."

Mr. Yard shook his head. The thought of food was a very fragrant one, but the money in his pocket clamoured for instant retreat.

"Can't," he said regretfully. "It's uncommon good of you, but I've got to get into Plymouth as quickly as possible."

"Plymouth!" exclaimed the Colonel, who had just come up. "If you want to go to Plymouth you'd better pack in with us. We can drop you at the Half-penny Gate, and you can pick up a tram from there."

"Thanks!" said Mr. Yard gratefully. "That'll do me fine."

"Come along, then," said the Colonel; "we're off right away."

"Will you be on the moor next Saturday?" cried Jack, pressing forward with the others to shake the hand of their parting guest.

"It's quite possible," admitted Mr. Yard.

"Well, you'll come and play for us again, won't you?"

"I'd like to," said Mr. Yard, "if I can get away."

He clambered into the brake with the soldiers, and waved a parting farewell to his late colleagues, who set up a ringing cheer as the big vehicle slowly rumbled off.

"Good set of lads," said the Colonel.

Mr. Yard, thoughtfully fingering the money in his pocket, nodded his head.

The eight-mile drive into Plymouth was not without its anxieties. At every turn in the road Mr. Yard half expected to find a mounted warder holding up his hand. No such untimely incident, however, marred the harmony of the day, and just as the clocks were striking half-past one the brake was clattering through the ill-paved, straggling streets of Devonport.

At the junction of Dockyard Road and Broadway, Mr. Yard's eyes detected a second-hand clothes shop of particularly disreputable aspect. He waited until they reached the next corner, and then, turning to the Colonel, remarked casually: "This'll do all right for me; I want to get some 'baccy."

"Right you are," said the Colonel, giving the order to stop. "You know where the bridge is—first to the left, then straight on."

Mr. Yard nodded, and climbed out. "Thank ye for the lift," he said.

"Not at all," answered the Colonel. "Delighted! The Battery will always be proud to think that they had the honour of playing against you and scoring a try—eh, men?"

There was a general chorus of "Yes, sir," and a hearty salute, which Mr. Yard gracefully returned.

Then the brake rolled off, leaving Mr. Yard standing in the road-way.

It was three days later, when Jack, folding up the *Western Morning News*, tossed it across to Tubby.

"There you are," he said, "pictures and everything. We shall never hear the last of this as long as we live."

Tubby caught the paper, and, unfolding it, read out the heavily leaded headlines:

ASTOUNDING AUDACITY OF ESCAPED CONVICT

The Notorious Bill Yard Plays Football for Okestock

FULL STORY AND INTERVIEWS

He skimmed quickly through the three columns of description, and then, with a grin, dropped the paper on the floor.

"We *do* look a pretty tidy lot of idiots," he admitted. "I wonder where he is?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "So do the police. They've no idea what happened to him after he got the clothes. He's simply vanished—disappeared, and my ten shillings with him." Then he paused. "I only wish it had been a quid," he added.

"Mine was," said Tubby sadly.

By
SIR MALCOLM CAMPBELL

★

WON BY INCHES

Brooklands track—that Mecca of all motor racing enthusiasts—and a fine Monday afternoon in late spring. A thought to bring joy to the hearts of all who love the sight and sound of swift steel monsters circling the great concrete basin, each battling against the rest for the supremacy of speed, their courses guided by men with nerves of steel and possessed of the uncanny judgement of speed and distance which stamps the successful racing driver.

In one of the bays reserved for the accommodation of racing cars a little knot of overalled figures was grouped around a huge, ungainly looking car which was due to make its Brooklands début in the longest race of the afternoon—a contest over 25 laps of the circuit, equal to rather more than sixty miles.

The group consisted of Mike Delaware, who was to drive the car which had been christened the “Delaware Special”, his two cousins, Bill and Jim, and their mechanics. Now, every frequenter of Brooklands knows what “Special” means when the term is applied to a racing car, and the Delaware was no exception to the general rule. An old chassis

frame, into which these clever youngsters and their helpers had built two 150 h.p. engines, mounted in the form of a "V", both driving through gears to a single clutch-shaft and so transmitting the whole 300 and more horse-power to the rear wheels. Contemptuously dismissed by the more knowing spectators as a junk-heap, not only the boys themselves but those against whom the car was to run knew that it had possibilities. In practice Mike had squeezed more than 130 miles per hour out of it and, provided nothing happened in the race, they were fairly confident of being somewhere among the first flight at the finish.

"It's the handicap that I'm worried about," said Jim. "They've put the poor old bus on scratch and she's got to give 25 seconds to the big Alfa and 20 to Lord Gray's Bugatti and we know they are just as fast—and they're both modern cars and pretty certain to stand up. Poor old Delly!"

"No need to worry. Gray's not driving himself, and Mason on the Alfa doesn't know the track like I do. We haven't started yet, let alone finished. And suppose we cut the cackle and run over everything one last time?"

Mike having spoken, the rest got busy and for the tenth time everything was checked over and the car pronounced ready for the race.

The first two races seemed to take an interminable time to run off but at last the word was given for competitors in the third event to go down to the

start. In overalls and racing helmet Mike was already in the driving seat. Willing hands pushed the car out of the paddock into the finishing straight, breaking into a run as soon as the car was headed down the track until, as Mike let in the clutch, with a jerk and a roar the twin engines leaped into life. Backing into position, he waited for the other competitors to line up for the procession to the starting point. To Bill and Jim the waiting for the start seemed endless. A blinding sun beat down on the concrete, the reek of burning oil pervaded everything, and the roar of the exhausts of twenty waiting cars, each seeming to express eagerness to be off, was so deafening as to be almost overpowering.

At last, a marshal appeared, signalling Mike to lead the procession down to the famous Fork where most races start. Lined up across the wide track the racers waited, exhausts roaring and smoke belching in blue clouds.

Then the starter's flag fell and three cars on the limit mark shot off, gears screaming and exhaust notes rising in a crescendo of thunderous noise. In a group they streaked up the rising track and were lost to sight behind the Hill. In ones, in twos and in threes the straining cars were despatched on their sixty miles' rush, until at last only Mike with the Alfa and the Bugatti were left on the line.

Then came the turn of the Bugatti. The flag was raised; the driver settled lower in his seat; the

exhaust note of the engine rose higher until it sounded as a high-pitched scream. Down fell the flag and the Bugatti hurled itself forward like a bright blue streak. Hard on its heels went the red Alfa, and Mike was left on the line alone.

By this time the first three cars to be despatched had completed a whole lap of the track—more than $\frac{1}{2}$ miles—and passed the lone "Special" at nearly hundred miles an hour. That twenty seconds between the despatch of the Alfa and his own "off" signal was the longest Mike had ever known. Immovably the starter stood beside the car, eyes on his chronometers, and flag held beside him. Would he never raise it and give the welcome announcement: "Five seconds to go—four—three—two—one—GO."

All suspense has an ending. The flag fell and the car was off with an ear-splitting roar of sound from its two engines, every cylinder firing in magnificent sequence showing the most perfect tuning. As they listened to the sound fading away in the distance, the boys felt well rewarded for the days and nights of almost sleepless work that had gone to achieve so perfect a result. By this time the earlier starters were coming up apace. Two overtook and passed him on the banking as he cleared it and dropped down into the railway straight. He let them go, for he knew it was no use pressing the big car so early in the race. He needed time to build up the speed of a heavy car like the "Special".

Half-way round on the first lap he had time to look about and size up the situation. The cars on the limit mark he disregarded. Provided nothing happened to the "Special", Mike knew that he had speed and to spare to overtake and pass them long before the end of the race was in sight. His two most feared rivals were the Alfa and the Bugatti. The first he could see just passing the Fork, but the Bugatti was nowhere to be seen. Evidently its greater acceleration had given it a lead a little in excess of its time allowance. The Alfa, Mike knew, would take more time to get well into its stride. He badly wanted to put his foot hard down on the throttle pedal, but that, he realised, was not the game to play—yet.

Three cars were just in front as he entered the banking behind the Hill for the second time. Evidently, their drivers believed they had speed enough to hold the "Special", but half-way along the railway straight Mike put his foot hard down for the first time and the car leaped forward like a thing of life, passing the others almost as though they were standing. The race was now on in good earnest. The banking on the Byfleet side seemed to rush at him with almost incredible speed. Then high on the bank sped the car, wheels within inches of the top of the concrete, to overtake another and pass it like a silvery streak. He was moving now! The car seemed to snake slightly at the terrific speed at which he was driving and Mike began to think of

his tyres. Over two tons of rushing, pulsating steel, moving at 150 miles an hour would soon begin to tell a tale of disintegration and ruin to rubber and fabric. However, one cannot stop to worry about these things when the race is to be fought—they are all in the laps of the speed gods who rule over the destinies of those who worship at their shrines!

A terrific dive off the banking, and then the nasty corner half-way across to the Fork, to be once more swallowed up on the banking behind the hill, and then another wild dive down into the railway straight. Foot hard down on the throttle pedal, with the car doing well over 150, Mike flew past a bunch of cars which had lapped him before the start. Where were his two most feared rivals? There, just shooting the bridge behind the aerodrome, was the blue Bugatti. He had gained at least a hundred yards in three laps. "He's losing speed," reflected Mike. "He's faster than I am—two miles an hour, if our clocking in practice was right, so I ought not to be as close up as this. Seems as though I've got him. But where's the Alfa?"

Meanwhile the two boys and the mechanics were watching anxiously at the Fork, each with a stop-watch checking off each lap. As the "Special" thundered by, the watches clicked and Jim remarked: "That's better. That lap was 76 seconds dead—131 miles an hour. The Bug was three seconds slower and the Alfa is lapping at 127. If he can keep going like this, he's bound to win."

"It's a long way to go yet. The worst of motor racing is that you never know what the luck's going to be. A broken valve-spring or a blown-out plug—and there you are. And, Holy Smoke, what's happened to the Bug?"

The low blue car, which on the last lap had seemed to be going well was seen to take a sudden dive down the banking just where it drops for the approach to the Fork. Its driver kept it under perfect control, but it was quite obvious he was in serious trouble with the car, which came to a stop by the edge of the track. At once, mechanics made a rush for the disabled car, which was pushed down to the Fork and parked in the "dead car" enclosure. It needed only a glance to see what had happened. Oil was streaming from beneath the engine. She was obviously out of the race for good. A connecting-rod had broken and smashed the crank-case to flinders.

The retirement of the Bugatti left only the one known serious rival to reckon with. The race was not yet half-way through and Mike still had five of the longer-handicapped cars in front, but he was not worried about them. The "junk-heap" was going better than ever it had done in practice, and from the fact he was not being signalled at the Fork he knew that he was more than holding his own. By this time he had the big red Alfa in sight, leading him by a full half mile. Weighing up the prospects, he knew he must now be gaining. The Alfa had had twenty

seconds start of him, it had far better acceleration from the start, and he had taken things easily for the first three laps. Altogether, that should account for at least three-quarters of a mile, so he figured that he had picked up a quarter of a mile in seven laps. "Not so bad," he thought. "That ought to mean that I'll pass him on the 24th lap—if we keep going like this. A pretty close fit, but a win by ten yards is as good as by a mile."

And so the race progressed, lap after lap. At the end of the seventeenth there were only two cars in it—the Alfa and Mike's "Special". The latter was steadily cutting down the lead of the big red Italian, which was now leading Mike by a short quarter of a mile. Long since, both cars had overtaken the better handicapped racers and left them fighting it out for third place. Their only hope of winning lay in the possible breakdown of both of the two leaders.

Another three laps and something seemed to happen to the Alfa. It slowed down and Mike began to overtake it, but when he had cut down its lead to a bare hundred yards suddenly it seemed to recover its speed and held its own magnificently. However, Mike had gained a full three hundred yards thanks to the temporary trouble which had slowed down his last remaining rival for the honours of the race. Another three circuits and he was drawing close up under the tail of the Italian car. Then, next time round, coming off the banking down to the railway straight, Mike made a supreme effort to draw level.

Taking the banking as high as he dared, wheels almost over the edge of the track, he came down in a terrific swoop like a diving aeroplane. Down the straight fled the two rushing monsters, wheel-cap to wheel-cap. The Alfa now having the inside berth was at a slight advantage, quite enough for the moment to compensate for the slightly higher speed of Mike's mount.

"I'll pass him on the level before we reach the Fork," was the thought that crossed Mike's mind.

He was driving a magnificent race, taking every advantage of his knowledge of the track and its peculiarities, every chance and every risk calculated with ice-cold precision.

Then something made Mike glance at his off-side front tyre and what he saw sent his heart momentarily into his boots. There was a distinct white streak showing, and another hurried look showed a similar mark on the rear tyre. He had been travelling as high up the banking as he dared go in order to get the maximum momentum in the swoop down to the straights. The terrific side pressure on the tyres had worn away the rubber until the woven casings were showing through. He realised only too well that if the off-side tyres, which he could see, were thus worn the others which were out of his sight must be in the same, or perhaps even worse condition. At any moment one of them might burst and, if they went while he was running practically locked together with the Alfa

there must be an almighty smash, which could only result in his own death and that of the driver of the other car.

What was he to do? Abandon the race, and with it all the hopes the little "stable" had built upon success? Should he let down his two cousins and the faithful staff that had sat up literally day and night to prepare the car for its crucial test? Or should he trust to the good guardianship of the gods and risk it to the end? For himself he did not care—he was out to take all the chances that come to the racing driver—but was it fair to the other driver knowingly to carry on in the face of almost certain catastrophe?

All the time these reflections were passing like lightning through his brain, Mike remained the "ace" driver he had shown himself to be. Until he resolved to drop out—if that were to be his decision—he drove as he had all through the race, with foot hard down and getting every ounce out of the huge car.

His mind was made up. There were but three laps to go now and he had established a slight lead, with the Alfa sitting on his tail. He would see it out. What he must do was to press the car to its limit for the next lap—dive off the banking like a projectile, and get as good a lead as possible so that, if anything *did* happen the other driver would have enough room to clear him. It was a chance, but he must take it. Winning this race meant so much—all their hopes depended upon it.

Thirty—forty yards were gained on that critical lap and Mike, master of tactics, felt that he could afford to ease the throttle slightly and let the car find its own place on the banking, so reducing a little the strain on the worn tyres. But he must not relinquish a yard of the advantage he had gained. By slowing too much he might give the Italian driver a chance to come with a rush at the finish and, what was even more to be reckoned with, he *must* give the other man a chance—even a slender one—of avoiding him if a tyre should go and throw the car into a wild skid.

So he eased his foot up ever so slightly and dropped to a speed which just enabled him to maintain his lead from the red car which was chasing him. And so they drove until at last they passed the Fork and entered upon the last lap. Still the worn tyres held, but the white streak on the front wheel, from which Mike could scarcely take his eyes, grew wider and more ominously wider. Only two more miles to go now—just one more minute. But in motor racing so much can happen in split seconds. A minute is an eternity when cars are travelling at 150 miles an hour.

Half-way round on the last lap now. Both cars breasting the Byfleet banking, with the "Special" leading by a hundred yards. Surely it is all over now—the Alfa cannot possibly make up the distance against the slightly faster car! Then a last wild swoop down toward the Fork and the winning line is in

sight. Bang! The offside rear tyre of Mike's car has gone! Luckily it does not leave the rim, but the car goes into a wild skid. Bits of rubber and fabric from the burst tyre are flying high in the air as Mike strives with all his might to keep the swerving monster under control, still with foot hard down in a last desperate effort to cross the line before the surging, roaring car which but a few seconds before he seemed to have well beaten. Slipping, sliding, exhaust screaming, the "Special" is now but thirty yards from the line, engines still going all out and Mike fighting literally for his life. The Alfa is upon his tail! Surely, it must win now against Mike's nearly crippled monster. But with a last despairing wrench at the steering wheel Mike manages to straighten up and both cars seem to go over the finishing line together. But the judge's verdict is: "Delaware Special wins by a foot!"

To all the congratulations that were showered upon Mike for his superb exhibition of driving, his only answer was: "Well, I did my best and I suppose I was lucky to win. It was a good race, until I realised what might happen if those tyres went. Then I wasn't a bit happy. But it's over now."

It was a cheery party that gathered in the family workshop that evening to look over the gallant car that had served the "stable" so well that day. "Good old junk-heap," said Bill. "You've brought home the bacon all right."

"Thanks to Mike and his driving, you should

say," countered Jim. "If he hadn't stuck it like he did, we'd be in mourning now instead of making whoopee."

"You can cut all that out," Mike chipped in. "If you want to get anything out of to-day's win it's just this. Stick to the job in hand and beat it—don't let it beat you. That's the motto we've all got to work to if we're going to make a real success of motor-racing—or anything else. And we're going to make a success, too. One of these days, you'll see, we'll have a go at the land speed record—and we'll beat *that*, too."

By
PATRICK CHALMERS



FINGALIAN

A STORY OF THE DEER FOREST

Reggie Carfax said to himself that though railways have many advantages, motors have more. His train was late into Hoy Road, on the Auchiness line, and "she" was "away". The porter, a dark, elderly Gael, referred so to the fast train for Auchiness. Yes, Reggie wished that he'd ordered a car.

The Gael got to hoeing the gravel and Reggie to a sort of quarterdeck promenade of the small platform. He was the only passenger on the Company's premises and, even though he had Highland scenery, and a fine September day, to console him, the delay was tedious. He might almost have walked the length of Auchiness; it wasn't 20 miles away. He looked at his watch, and, an hour later, looking at it again, he consulted the expert with the hoe.

"*When* did you say the Auchiness train——"

"She's due these fifteen minutes. You'll be for Auchiness?"

"Yes."

"That'll be her now."

Reggie followed the pointing finger, and, sure enough, two miles off, he saw a puff of smoke, white against a pine-covered foothill. The little junction began to exhibit something almost akin to animation. A trowsled youth in shirt sleeves appeared from some coy retreat and rang a dinner-bell. A car drove up and a middle-aged man in Lovat mixture, alighting, strode through the toy booking-office and onto the platform. The new comer had no luggage and no chauffeur, facts from which it might be guessed that he personally met an arrival. The train drew in with a clatter. A girl, and passengers of no importance, got out.

Reggie Carfax was thirty and a bachelor. He had, therefore, excuse for girls, not that he over-availed of it. This girl was extremely excusable; her bearing was buoyant, her complexion, though sunbrowned, was perfect. Her hair was corn-coloured, her eyes grey. She walked as a graceful boy. She greeted the man in Lovat as, "Hullo, Daddy," and, dutifully, she kissed him.

"There," said Reggie, "goes an angel."

The porter was at his elbow.

"Ye'll be for Auchiness? Ay? Yon's her." He nodded at the dark-green coaches.

"Yes," said Reggie, looking at the angel's back, "it may well be so."

The porter pitched the Carfax luggage into the compartment from which the vision had alighted. Reggie thrust a florin into the official hand as he saw

that a lady had left a hat-box on the rack. He seized the box and ran after its presumable owner.

"You are Miss Shaftoe?"

"Yes."

"This is yours? I saw your name on it."

"Oh, thank you so much."

Reggie had just time to admire, in close-up, a straight nose decorated by a golden freckle or so, two rows of white teeth and a friendly smile. He heard the man in Lovat say, "You'll forget your head next, Betty". A whistle sounded and he was "for Auchiness" in earnest. But he knew her name, Betty Shaftoe, Miss Betty Shaftoe, bless her grey eyes.

Carfax was the owner of Tarf Forest which is situated some thirty miles from Auchiness. Tarf is no fenced deer-park. Tarf is a young man's forest, some say a steeple-jack's. It is "difficult" as Jura, a little as Glenkinglas. Reggie could not afford to keep so attractive a pleasure-ground in his own hands. He was well-to-do but not so well-to-do that he could dispense with the £4,000 a year which Grant Van Cortlandt, of New York, paid for a two month's rental. This season, however, his tenant had been summoned to Wall Street in early September and, with the magnificence of the magnate, he had presented his landlord with the balance of his tenancy. Reggie knew, and loved, all Tarf's gruff peaks, and wild corries; he was happy among them and at home.

There are 80,000 steep acres of Tarf and in the long Glen of Tarf, which crosses the Forest from Loch

Tarf to Dalladale, are Tarf's primeval woods, 7,000 acres of thicket and morass. These great woods are part of the ancient *fûsach*, or so used to say *Black's Guide*. They grow in a chaos of boulders and swamps, and their recesses are almost unexplored. As capable of holding surprises as is proverbial Africa, their "beild" is fine winter harbour for the deer, and out of their sanctuary, about once in 50 years, comes into the forest such a stag as few could suspect to be in Scotland.

Reggie was a born forester; he could find, stalk, get into and shoot a beast without professional aid other than that of a gillie to gralloch and a pony for the venison. The morning after his arrival he started alone for the extreme beat of his ground. Half a week of south-westerly gale had filled the ultimate corries with deer. The wind had fallen now, the barometer had risen and was still rising.

He left the Lodge before eight. He walked uphill through the larchwood with its wild raspberry canes, bell-heather, patches of open ling and outcrops of granite. He travelled the broken sheeptrack on to the grouse moor and, then, by a five-mile ascent, he came to the forest. It was still early when he sat down to spy. Reggie loved the familiar rituals of the hill. The shot was an incident and so was the trophy. Not that he despised a heavy beast for the larder and a good head to add to the collection in the Lodge. But the stalk was the thing that mattered, the pitting of his forest craft against that of a creature of the clouds, the suns and the mists. He laid down his rifle and sat

th his back to a boulder. His glass crept uphill and down, from the crags of the ptarmigan into grey-green rries where the tossed boulders lay as great as houses. Below him, no bigger than a burn, ran the little river Hurich. There were deer by the water, lots of deer, stags and hinds, decent, indifferent and trash. There was a goodish beast with a dark mane among the peat hags. And there were several parcels of hinds and small stuff at the foot of the main corrie, their coats gleaming in the sun. If there was a shootable stag among the last he must be lying down? Reggie could see only rubbish. The dark stag and his harem were a mile away and a cloud-shadow, moving on the wild landscape, obscured them. Beyond were the high, broken hills, and, beyond these, peak after higher peak of faint and fainter blue.

Reggie ended his search without finding what he wanted, the stag which the stalker had reported. No, Fraser had not seen the beast himself, the shepherd on the sheep ground of Hoy, across the march, had told of it. It was, maybe, one of the great deer which sometimes came up from the secret woods into the stony hills to fight, to wive and, possibly, to die. It was two lifetimes ago since a like hart had been seen in Tarf. "Dunbar," said Fraser, "kenn't deer well enough for a shepherd." And Dunbar had told of this stag, that he was a great brute of near 30 stone with head like a castle. Reggie reminded himself that while Dunbar, no doubt, exercised a poetic licence, the big stag, shot in '74, weighed 27 stone clean and

that his head, 14 points of wild rough horn, was, on the whole, still the best on the Lodge walls. Reggie sighed and told himself that the dark beast in the peat hag, a ten pointer, he thought, would have to do.

But before he committed himself to the stalk, he would take another spy. Once more the lenses went patiently to work. The glass crept on its search; it made good again the cup of the corrie, it explored the vast spaces, it sought along the river and, slowly, slowly, it crawled up to the rim of the ridge. And there Reggie's hand steadied into stone. For along and over the skyline hinds were walking, fifty hinds at least. They came as though they had been moved and yet were not unduly alarmed since they stopped to feed as they came. But a hill instinct told the watcher that that which might follow would come out of all Romance.

There came a further silhouette of slim, brown forms. Then there walked into focus a stag whose like Reggie had never, outside of a dream, seen upon a hill. He was a hart indeed and Dunbar was no liar; that hart might have marched into Tarf out of the Pleistocene. As he came inferior stags rose up and gave him room. He lifted his head and roared and his antlers cloaked him end to end. He followed his hinds petulantly into the great corrie and out of Reggie's view.

The slight wind had fallen to nothing and the quiet of the hills could be felt. In the lift, stationary as a star, was an eagle. The far cliffs were honey-coloured by a steady sun. The hour seemed made for wonders

s though a man had stepped out of everyday and entered into the silence of the *Shi*. Was that great tag the prodigy of a stalker's imagination, a fantasy of the forest? For what, in Princes Street, would be called stuff and nonsense is, on the hill, "stuff o' the conscience". Was there not that great deer and its strange rider, in the beallach at Reay? Was there not the unco' hart which came seeking the Black Officer? And that evil beast, the vanishing stag of the Lewes, of which Mr. Hely Hutchinson tells?

Yet the glass did not lie, nor, it appeared, did Dunbar. Reggie returned the telescope to its case. He picked up his rifle. It was .240 hammerless ejector and he had got her "in a present" from his father for his twenty-first birthday. It was a lovely weapon, reasonably light to carry, and he preferred it before any magazine piece. For two shots at a time are sufficient on the hill; if you fail with both, leave it at that. But Reggie did not mean to fail. Young Alastair Fraser and the white shelt were far away, he was to play a lone hand, he was to match himself in the wilderness with a mountain god, with a beast of the forest, and with a hillside of the beast's hinds.

There were two ways for the stalker. He could take a three-mile circle and make in over the corrie's lip. Or he could take the nearer road, up the rocky course of the Hurich. Did he take the former he might arrive to find that the deer had moved to—who could say whither? Did he take the last, and run the risk of alarming a landscape of hinds and beasts of no account,

at least any untoward movement of deer would be impossible without his knowledge. Then let it be the river.

Reggie breathed the pagan invocation of Pan by which, since the days of Meleager, all stalkers, with or without knowledge of what they do, commence a major operation of the hill. Then he started, moving among knolls and boulders, as quietly as a shadow. Now he was within the scattered circle of the deer. There was no breath of wind, no sound except the gush and chuckle of running water. The nearer hinds were now, no doubt, within a hundred yards of him but Reggie, in the river bed, remained hidden from curiosity. It would be wise, maybe, did he take to the water itself? He entered the cold, amber shoot of the stream and worked his way slowly up it, pushing the rifle along the brink. Soon he must take more precise bearings; to do so would mean a peep over the steep margin. Waist deep in brown water Reggie stopped. So still he stood that the little Hurich trout, recovering from the panic of his approach, returned to their stances and flicked about his legs without concern. Then Reggie drew himself up the bank till his eyes were level with the bell-heather on the bank. So was his nose and it was at once filled with the overpowering odour of fox. Not five yards away a big, full-brushed hill dog lay in his sunny couch and stared at Reggie with yellow, slitten eyes. Reggie returned the stare, modestly sinking himself once more into the noise and pull of the river. But the fox, he was

s big as a collie, his tag as white as snow, was not reassured. He rose, whisked his brush and moved off. Again Reggie Carfax lifted up; as he did so, a long-legged, grey-muzzled hind sprang a-foot to look first at the fox then to whence the fox came. Another red-nantled matron and yet another, followed her example. That fox? What had moved him? The three could not tell but, ears forward, they stood to see and then trotted briskly up to the brae. Reggie, savagely telling himself that all was lost, that the whole hill would now stampede, yet kept a frozen stillness. And his forestry was rewarded for, in a moment or so, the hinds stopped, wheeled about and looked back. Then they walked on picking a bite on the way. Reggie remained immovable. Once more his three Fates halted and looked back. They saw no cause for uneasiness and the walk became a pasture-extending stroll. Now and then one would jerk her head at the flies, another rub her black nose on her knee.

But meanwhile Reggie, in the pool's neck, had been obstructing the current. Moving now, perhaps, he made some curious difference in the lull and cadence of the river. The change of tune reawakened suspicions. The elderly, grey-muzzled hind, she who had first accepted the fox as a portent, stiffened to attention, laid back her ears and came mincingly. On an outcrop of rock she stood and stared towards the water. Then, *pruah*, she cried aloud, and she bolted. That was that then. Reggie scrambled up the bank, pulling the rifle from its cover. Further concealment

was unnecessary. The steep places were alive with moving deer, deer trotting uphill in high, delicate action. Among the processions went a fair head or so. The black-maned ten pointer, ambling leisurely after his hinds, was within shooting distance. Reggie raised the express. Then he changed his mind for, at the rear of a process of hinds, which streamed up from a long green hollow, came the great stag. At four hundred yards he stood to look back as if to see what ailed his ladies at Coire Hurich. His wild, "wind-swept" head was high and sublime. He dwarfed the ten-pointer as the ten-pointer might have dwarfed a roebuck. It was a fool's shot to fire but one from which it would have been superhuman to refrain. So Reggie fired it and saw the bullet hit the rocks beyond the stag. He saw the puff of dust it raised as it hummed into void.

"Damn," said Reggie Carfax, "if I hadn't fired they might have stopped somewhere this side of Kingdom Come. Well, he's none the worse of it."

He watched the many deer, now assembling together, mount the hill and begin to cross a hazy, blue skyline. The great stag loomed enormous as one of the cloud-born shapes of Ossian. Then he was gone.

Reggie looked at his watch. He had left the Lodge at 7.45. It was not 12.30. He would climb to the top of the corrie and take a further prospect. With a practised stride he began the ascent. But he stopped of a sudden and whipped out the telescope. Surely there was a magic abroad to-day? Surely he had walked into

Tir-nan-ogue? Yes, it was a girl, or the semblance of a girl, high upon the ridge. By all in Faerie and Forestry, it was, yes, it was, Miss Betty Shaftoe, and she was waving to him.

While Reggie Carfax, four hours ago, walked to the Forest among the larch trees above the Lodge, Miss Shaftoe, fifteen miles away, had just finished breakfast. She was the only child, and favourite model, of John Shaftoe, the Royal Academician. Mr. Shaftoe was the holiday tenant of Hoy Lodge, of its excellent fishing and its rough shooting. He was a widower and his daughter might have stepped out of her frame at the Tate Gallery to lean, as she now did, on the dining-room window-sill at Hoy. Four miles away she could see the tops of Tarf Forest, blue against the paler blue of heaven. A cloud shadow shifted and a nearer hill face, rocky and break-neck, stood, sharp and clear in the sunshine. Betty, kneeling, rested a telescope upon the sill and spied the slope from crest to base.

"I see deer," she said.

"Stags or hinds?" asked Mr. Shaftoe, helping himself to kedgerree.

"Hinds," said Betty, "hinds, I *think*. 'The hind of the mountain, the sweet brown princess,'" she quoted.

"Stags have horns if you are in doubt."

"Thank you, dear. They are coming onto us, I do believe. I shall take the camera and try and get a picture. Oh yes, I know you artists don't call a photograph a picture."

"Take the rifle if you like, Betty; there's probably a stag among them."

"I *don't* like, stags must be shot, I suppose, poor things, but I'd rather someone else shot them than I."

"If they were not shot they'd not exist. Anyhow, stalking is the most merciful of the saltpetre ploys. A bullet is, ought to be anyhow, one devil of a shock and that's the end."

"You speak as if you'd experienced one. No, I'll take the camera. Much more sporting. You must get within 50 yards for a photo, for a shot 150 will do."

"Well, my dear, you're as good a forester as Maid Marian, wasn't it? You love the 'tall deer' like Duke William. You're keen, you can take care of yourself, you're there when you're wanted, you run like Atalanta and crawl like a cat. Better take Cullis and the car as far as Bridge of Hoy. He'll be back in time to drive me to the loch."

Before long, Betty was walking up the sheep-ground towards the march. Here and there a burn bubbled under a lid of long hill grass. Now and then a black-face baa'd on a brae, a grouse jumped up with a challenge. Beyond, a bright sun lit the wild distances of Tarf.

When Betty came to the Bowman's Cairn, where chiefs of old waited at the *tainchel*, she sat down and spied. Beneath was the low ground of the Hoy burn, a breadth of peat hags, of grassy hillocks and hollows. And upon it were dotted hinds and calves, probably the very deer she'd seen from the window. The spyer closed her glass. The most approachable were six

hundred yards away. Those two hinds in the sun, each with her calf, were the indicated sitters. Both were kenspeckle beasts. One was large and noticeably light in colour. Her companion was dark; if not, as MacNessa's hind, "dark as solitude," she was as mousy-blue as a daughter of the November hill. Betty began to stalk them. As Mr. Shaftoe had said, she could crawl like a cat.

The first five hundred yards was plain sailing. Betty had an eye for ground and judgement beyond her years of what can be done in the presence of deer. Could she now reach a bit of old bell-heather, 50 yards away, she'd do. She took twenty careful minutes to arrive at the wine-red patch of advantage. The hinds lay drowsily cud-chewing, their two spotted calves skipped, skylarked and butted each other. Betty, her eyes on the domestic moment, raised the camera inch by inch. Movement, a suggestion of movement, made her look down. Upon a sun-warm stone scarce a foot from her nose was curled a big, black adder. It erected its flat head, its tongue flickered.

Hill-woman though she was, Betty, daughter of Eve, hated and feared adders. Venery, Art itself, forgotten, she sprang up and back with a small, involuntary, "Oh!" She saw the further ground start to life with alert, long-eared ladies who stood to see. She heard the rush and rattle of hooves, she saw a cantering flux of red coats and white rumps. And, then, heaving up from the privacy of a peat-hole, rose an immense stag, heavy as a bullock and horned like a

tree. He trotted off, looking rather bored, in the wake of his wives. Betty put the glass onto him, the adder was a thing of the past. Pale with excitement, she watched the big beast go. "My word," she said, as one who sees visions. "*Elks and wapitis*," said she.

The hinds were walking now, snatching a mouthful as they passed over the ridge and out of sight. Lastly Betty saw the stag on the skyline, his head against the sky, huge, Fingalian. Then he too disappeared.

A primitive instinct of the chase sent Miss Shaftoe full pelt over the burn, over the march, and in pursuit. She vaguely remembered how she had heard that the tenants of Tarf had gone South. But she would, I think, have followed blindly even had the American markets remained stable, even had all the magnates of Wall Street been out on the hill. It took the trespasser an hour to reach the desolation of stone across which the deer had vanished. A covey of ptarmigan ran among the rocks, small white-and-grey birds, as tame as chickens. Below her and to eastward, clear in the sun, was the ground which Reggie Carfax had spied two hours ago. Betty was, of course, on the plateau above Corrie Hurich. Those, therefore, who have stalked in Tarf will recognise that she was close by to the little right-angled beallach, called *nan clach* (of the stones), the well-known, narrow deer pass which leads, left and right, into the western corries of the forest.

It was noon, fine, windless, warm; Betty sat down and took her telescope out. The green floors far below showed her deer, tiny, light red, parties of deer. But

though she saw stags among them, there was no rumour of the stag that she had gone running after. All the high tops of Scotland ringed her about, far off, infinite, tremendous. There was no sound except the sly gurgle and hush of hidden water. Betty, back in the Stone Age, felt small, humble and, a little, all alone. But she ate her sandwiches and, self-respect restored, she walked west towards the beallach where she would take yet another spy. And, did she not find, from there, what she wanted, why, she'd say that she had been trying to photograph a dream of *Deerstalking* by General Crealock. And then she'd go home.

She reached the beallach's eastern end. As she did so, she heard, from below, the faint, but authentic, report of a rifle. So? Certainly then, she had better be getting back to Hoy. Nevertheless, Betty put up her telescope and again searched the slopes. A straggle of beasts on the brae-face lifted their heads and began to move. The shot had disturbed them. Indeed, as far as eye could see, deer—stags, hinds and calves—were coming in ragged lines uphill. *Her* stag? She could see nothing of him. Perhaps, even now, some awe-struck forester was handling an historic head? Somehow Betty hoped not. She put the glass down. Then, swiftly, she threw herself flat among the stones. Over the eastern edge of the beallach she could see, within thirty yards of her, the up-thrust ears of a hind. Then their owner walked cautiously into the picture. Another hind followed and then another. And now, at the entry of the narrow passage, Betty saw

many deer. They paused there, as if for breathing space, after their long walk uphill. Light-browns, duns and reds, they halted, posturing in all the wild graces, shifting, fidgeting, shaking their flanks, looking back to whither they had come.

They were entering the beallach now. They came to the clatter and patter of sharp little hoofs on shale. First were hinds, titupping daintily, some with a dappled calf at foot. And now, in the entry, were antlers of many sizes and shapes, of many measurements. Betty heard a clash of horn as, occasionally, a couple of the smaller beasts scuffed and sparred. *Here* was a fairish royal; *there* an eight-pointer and now a caber. The heavier beasts *peched* with the heat. Heads were passing in such choice that fair was indistinguishable from good, good from better. The deer came jostling each other as sheep. They came and they passed, unconscious of the girl who watched their passing.

And now the pageant is all but over. Yet a few of the rearguard, the bigger stags, are still coming. Resentful, it seems, of the disturbance of their peace, they slouch over the loose shale. Betty has taken pictures beyond the dreams of development. But she has kept a film or so for a contingency which has now ceased, almost, to be contingent.

There was a grunt and a hoarse bellow. Then, in a scrambling scamper, a black-maned ten-pointer shot into the pass, and, a-top of him, broding at his prime haunches, making but a staggart of the bonny beast,

thundered the big stag. The driven one passed in undignified skedaddle. His master, seemingly content, slowed his pace and came by, rolling his fat venison and immense horn. Across his broad back, across the black horizontal line of it, was a red weal from which a bullet, barely breaking the skin, had cut the pelage. Though the flies buzzed about the wound the stag seemed unaware of skaith. He had perhaps, felt a waspish little wind pass above his withers; that would be all.

"But," thought Betty, "though *he's* all right, *somebody* down there must be feeling pretty sick." Her hands shook but, as the stag came opposite to her, the camera clicked. She had him at close range, the sun on his dark-red coat. She had a confused impression of heroic haunch and horn, of girth and saddle, of tines tipped in ivory, of black, rough beam, pearled and grooved and strong. Then the stag was by, the beallach empty save of rock and sunshine.

Betty stood up, the sight vouchsafed had left her a little out of "her ordinar".

"I shall remember it always," she said. She walked to the ridge where she had lunched; she lit a cigarette, sat down and saw, half-a-mile away, the blink of sun on a rifle barrel. She turned her glass downhill and recognised the young man of Hoy Road Junction.

Reggie Carfax was no Adonis but he was as pleasant to look at as a fine April day. Betty told herself that it had been decent of him to run after her with the hat-box. There hadn't been time to thank

him. And she was trespassing in the forest, therefore she ought to explain herself, to apologise, rather than run away. Anyhow, it was one up to her that she had moved the stag off the sheepground and, once more, into the forest. And she felt it only proper to mention that graze over the beast's back. A near thing that. She had, moreover, seen the stag last and latest information should be of interest to the stalker. For all these good reasons, though Miss Shaftoe might not have admitted the first one, Betty stood up and waved a handkerchief. She was seen, for the young man, stopping, took to his telescope. Then he waved back and came striding uphill. Betty went to meet him.

"Miss Shaftoe! How splendid!"

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" said Betty whose father, a simple soul, had reared her on Victorian formulae, "but I've no business to discover myself in Tarf Forest."

"On the contrary, I'm delighted to see you here. My name's Carfax." Mr. Carfax really was delighted.

"Where have you come from?"

"Hoy," said Betty, "over the march. I heard the shot——"

"I missed the biggest beast——"

"In all Scotland. I saw him, he was on the sheepground at Hoy, of all places."

"The Muckle Hart of Benmore was a sheepground stag."

"This stag would make two of him. But you didn't

together miss, I mean——” Betty explained. She told of the passage of the beallach.

“They’ve gone into the western corries,” said Reggie. “I doubt if we shall find *him* now, not that matters so much——” He had been about to add, now that I’ve found you,” but, wisely, he cut the compliment.

“Shall you not try?”

“Very certainly I shall look for him. It’s not late and it will be a light evening. Won’t you come with me, Miss Shaftoe? We can get down afterwards to Vest Bothy, the second stalker’s croft, and send Mathieson to the sweetie-shop *cum* post-office on the Auchiness road. He can telephone from there for a car to take you home. And Mrs. Mathieson will make you a ‘cup tea’. *Do* come.”

“Thank you,” said Betty, “if I shan’t be in the way?”

“You won’t,” Reggie assured her, “come on, then.”

It was nearly three o’clock when he and Betty Shaftoe sat down and spied. Carefully they glassed the slopes above little Loch Mark and there they found deer in plenty. They saw the black-maned ten-ointer, they saw a reasonable royal and, on any other afternoon, either would have seemed the fit subject for a stalk. The stag without equal, was not to be seen. In a subsidiary corrie there were nearly a hundred hinds but they were none of his.

Reggie looked at his watch.

"We've little more than three hours shooting light," he said. "It will take us the most of it to go round these devils. But *he* isn't here so there's chance that he may be beyond, in Coire na Beiste it would be appropriate, anyhow."

"Why?"

"Coire na Beiste means 'Corrie of the Big Beast' probably Cu-chulain, or one of 'em, killed our friend's first father there. Well, there's just a chance——"

"Then," said Betty, "let's take it."

They climbed fast, Betty running with innate ease over the steep and stony places. They crossed the peat banks and saw no sign of deer crossed before them. They crossed the broken ground above the shallow corrie where the hinds lay sunning themselves. They risked moving the seraglio. And luck was with the two as they went, for never a deer looked up. Peat-stained and wet with hill-water they came to Coire na Beiste from above.

Coire na Beiste is the grimmest ground in Tarf. It looks, I think, its most beautiful, and most sinister, when, as now, its sheer rampages of rock rise, warm and golden, in the slant of a September sun. Beyond the corrie soar the steepes of Fergus and the crooked spine of Dalladale. Below are boggy flats of cotton grass through which a small, slow, senna-hued water serpentines, drearily, East to West. To South, between the flats and the pallid ribs of Riath, is a queer-looking causeway. It is a moraineic gravel, a relic of the Ice Melt, and its grey back might almost have

ben Macadamised, so smoothly it flows. This Way of the Ice, extending for two miles about the bases of Riath, has a uniform breadth of 100 yards and the ill-viper herself could scarcely hope to cross it unscathed. In Tarf, men call it "The Road of Riath", or, in the west, "The Road".

Young eyes and Bond Street lenses, searched those dark, fearful Places of the Deer, unchangeable places, the same to-day as when the Fianna slipped their long logs, Bran, Sgeolan, Brod, on Fergus beyond the fens. The low ground was in shadow though the far peaks were flushed with the fiery, yellow glare of approaching sunset. The corrie was empty of deer. The flats were void.

It was Betty who first said, "I see beasts".

"Where?"

"Over that river of stone, under Riath, in the scars, to the left."

"Over 'The Road'?"

"Yes."

"I have them, hinds, lying down——"

"They're *his*—I'd swear to the downhill two with the calves, they were on Hoy this morning—a very bright red beast and—*Mr. Carfax*, I see *him*, at least I see horns, they can only be his, he moved his head—he's beyond the near hinds. D'you see that white one? He's lying down on the other side of the out-crop just underneath that green patch——"

Betty's report was a pelt of excited words.

"Yes," said Reggie, "I see him, at least I thought

I saw the light catch his crockets. He slewed his head over, probably the flies at that graze—Yes, that's him. *And*, he's nearly impossible."

"Why?"

"There's no light left to let us round, and in or him, from above. If we go direct we can't cross 'The Road'. He's a hundred yards beyond it and lying out of sight. No chance of a neck shot. It would be a longish chance anyhow."

"You could whistle him up?"

"For a snap at his haunches? There's a fold of ground beyond him, it would cover him in a stride. And I was taught to 'wait till he rises'. There's just one way——"

"Yes?"

"There's no wind, such as is will help us reach 'The Road'. And there'll be frost to-night, as soon as the sun goes."

"Well?"

"As soon as the sun goes, the wind will change to North, it always does with frost. We'll have it at our backs so. They'll find us then and rise."

"Let's try."

"It's a rough stalk; it means a scramble down 'The Lum', there, 'Cu-Chulain's Chimney', that seam in the corrie; sides of houses are a holiday to it."

"I'll come."

"That's *fine*. But, once on the flats, we can wade up the Black Water for three hundred yards, easy as partridge-shooting. Then, from there, we ought to be

able to get into the rim of 'The Road' and hope for luck. But there's no time to lose."

"Come, then."

It took half-an-hour to put this programme into practice. But, at the end of thirty minutes, Reggie and Betty were lying on the lip of the moraine. Both were warm and wet. The stag had made no move though he seemed restless. His horns were constantly visible as he turned his head this way or that. The greater number of his hinds still lay about him though one or two were up and feeding.

Reggie loaded the rifle.

"Will you take the shot—if there is one?" he whispered to Betty. "I'd like it if you would." And Reggie really meant what he said. Betty shook her head vehemently.

"I'd hate to," she answered, "but thank you."

Out of the tail of her eye she could still see a lingering gold on the fierce pinnacles of Dalladale. The corries and lower slopes were filled by a chill, strange turquoise. Five minutes passed and the gold was gone; the high tops stood tremendous, darkly heaped against a wash of rose-pink sky. Betty felt a breath of ice on her neck. "*The North!*" she whispered.

A feeding hind lifted her head. One after another the vigilant matrons stood up. A hillside of noses tested the wind. And, in another moment, the stag hoisted his weight of haunch and stood among his ladies. His antlers soared as a song. And the mass of the hinds, now moving about him, covered their master from harm.

"They'll beat us," muttered Reggie, "He'll bolt." But, cheek to stock, he followed the glint of his barrels for a chance which might be. "They'll beat us—*ah!*"

A light-coloured hind, the hind of Hoy, halted in procession and turned to call softly to her calf. Turning, she left clear two hands' breadth of her lord's broad shoulder. Betty shut her eyes as the rifle ripped out. Then she opened them. Along the walls of Coire na Beiste an echo ran growling. Mr. Carfax still lay as he had lain to take the shot; from the rifle's muzzle there flowed a thin feather of smoke. Up and over the ribs of Riath hinds galloped hither and yon.

The stag stood where he had stood a second ago. But the curve of his deep quarter was tucked, the maned and massy neck was thrust forward, the wild head drooped as though under the weight of its honours. Then his knees knuckled and he fell heavily onto his side. And now he lay still.

"Oh," said Betty, "*oh*, he's dead."

"Yes," said Reggie Carfax. He scrambled to his feet.

The two began to walk across the gravel. Then, hand-in-hand, they went running.

Hit, just rightly, the stag's end had been as quick an end as a stag might have. Yet Betty heard herself say, "*poor*"; then, "oh, I don't know, he'd only have grown old and sorry. Possibly it's better this way." Gently she straightened the long, grey legs.

Carfax stood uncovered before the great beast which he had killed. But there was triumph in his face as well as reverence.

"Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen," he counted. "Sixteen joints and," he guessed magnificently, "30 stone clean—Betty Shaftoe, I beg your pardon, you said?"

"Nothing," said Betty, "nothing that matters. Why, I declare, there's the pony coming! There, in below Fergus."

"So it is," said Reggie, "smart youth, Alastair, and, smarter still, he's got another lad with him. Mathieson most likely. They'll saddle up so without our help. We shall meet them on the way to Mathieson's house and Alastair will get his load to the larder before eleven. He'll have a rough travel but there'll be a moon to light it. Come."

They went with a day's doings to do again, *da capo*, with laughter and a pinch of sentiment to match the solemn hills.

When, much later, Reggie put Betty into the Hoy car he said, "Good-night, Betty Shaftoe, and I shall tell McLeay's to send you the head when it's set up."

"Borrowed plumes?" said Betty, "I shouldn't dream of accepting them."

"I'll risk it," said Reggie.

The head came home six months later; it was addressed to Mrs. Reginald Carfax and Betty made no bones about receiving it. And she and Reggie, and other experienced foresters, will tell you of that glorious trophy, that it is the greatest head, as its once wearer was the greatest Scotch stag, since 100 years, since, most likely, the days of Fingal himself.

By
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

★

THE CROXLEY MASTER

I

Mrs. Robert Montgomery was seated at his desk, his head upon his hands, in a state of the blackest despondency. Before him was the open ledger with the long columns of Dr. Oldacre's prescriptions. At his elbow lay the wooden tray with the labels in various partitions, the cork box, the lumps of twisted sealing-wax, while in front a rank of empty bottles waited to be filled. But his spirits were too low for work. He sat in silence, with his fine shoulders bowed and his head upon his hands.

Outside, through the grimy surgery window over a foreground of blackened brick and slate, a line of enormous chimneys like Cyclopean pillars upheld the lowering, dun-coloured cloud-bank. For six days in the week they spouted smoke, but to-day the furnace fires were banked, for it was Sunday. Sordid and polluting gloom hung over a district blighted and blasted by the greed of man. There was nothing in the surroundings to cheer a desponding soul, but it was more than his dismal environment which weighed upon the medical assistant.

His trouble was deeper and more personal. The winter session was approaching. He should be back again at the University completing the last year which would give him his medical degree; but, alas! he had not the money with which to pay his class fees, nor could he imagine how he could procure it. Sixty pounds were wanted to make his career, and it might have been as many thousands for any chance there seemed to be of his obtaining it.

He was roused from his black meditation by the entrance of Dr. Oldacre himself, a large, clean-shaven, respectable man, with a prim manner and an austere face. He had prospered exceedingly by the support of the local Church interest, and the rule of his life was never by word or action to run a risk of offending the sentiment which had made him. His standard of respectability and of dignity was exceedingly high, and he expected the same from his assistants. His appearance and words were always vaguely benevolent. A sudden impulse came over the despondent student. He would test the reality of this philanthropy.

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Oldacre," said he, rising from his chair; "I have a great favour to ask of you."

The doctor's appearance was not encouraging. His mouth suddenly tightened, and his eyes fell.

"Yes, Mr. Montgomery?"

"You are aware, sir, that I need only one more session to complete my course."

"So you have told me."

"It is very important to me, sir."

"Naturally."

"The fees, Dr. Oldacre, would amount to about sixty pounds."

"I am afraid that my duties call me elsewhere, Mr. Montgomery."

"One moment, sir! I had hoped, sir, that perhaps, if I signed a paper promising you interest upon your money, you would advance this sum to me. I will pay you back, sir, I really will. Or, if you like, I will work it off after I am qualified."

The doctor's lips had thinned into a narrow line. His eyes were raised again, and sparkled indignantly.

"Your request is unreasonable, Mr. Montgomery. I am surprised that you should have made it. Consider, sir, how many thousands of medical students there are in this country. No doubt there are many of them who have a difficulty in finding their fees. Am I to provide for them all? Or why should I make an exception in your favour? I am grieved and disappointed, Mr. Montgomery, that you should have put me into the painful position of having to refuse you." He turned upon his heel, and walked with offended dignity out of the surgery.

The student smiled bitterly, and turned to his work of making up the morning prescriptions. It was poor and unworthy work—work which any weakling might have done as well, and this was a man of exceptional nerve and sinew. But, such as it was, it brought him his board and £1 a week, enough to help him during the summer months and let him save a few pounds

towards his winter keep. But those class fees! Where were they to come from? He could not save them out of his scanty wage. Dr. Oldacre would not advance them. He saw no way of earning them. His brains were fairly good, but brains of that quality were a drug in the market. He only excelled in his strength; and where was he to find a customer for that? But the ways of Fate are strange, and his customer was at hand.

"Look y'ere!" said a voice at the door.

Montgomery looked up, for the voice was a loud and rasping one. A young man stood at the entrance—a stocky, bull-necked young miner, in tweed Sunday clothes and an aggressive necktie. He was a sinister-looking figure, with dark, insolent eyes, and the jaw and throat of a bulldog.

"Look y'ere!" said he again. "Why hast thou not sent t' medicine oop as thy master ordered?"

Montgomery had become accustomed to the brutal frankness of the Northern worker. At first it had enraged him, but after a time he had grown callous to it, and accepted it as it was meant. But this was something different. It was insolence—brutal, overbearing insolence, with physical menace behind it.

"What name?" he asked coldly.

"Barton. Happen I may give thee cause to mind that name, yoong man. Mak' oop t' wife's medicine this very moment, look ye, or it will be the worse for thee."

Montgomery smiled. A pleasant sense of relief thrilled softly through him. What blessed safety-valve

was this through which his jangled nerves might find some outlet. The provocation was so gross, the insult so unprovoked, that he could have none of those qualms which take the edge off a man's mettle. He finished sealing the bottle upon which he was occupied, and he addressed it and placed it carefully in the rack.

"Look here!" said he, turning round to the miner, "your medicine will be made up in its turn and sent down to you. I don't allow folk in the surgery. Wait outside in the waiting-room, if you wish to wait at all."

"Yoong man," said the miner, "thou's got to mak' t' wife's medicine here, and now, and quick, while I wait and watch thee, or else happen thou might need some medicine thyself before all is over."

"I shouldn't advise you to fasten a quarrel upon me." Montgomery was speaking in the hard, staccato voice of a man who is holding himself in with difficulty. "You'll save trouble if you'll go quietly. If you don't you'll be hurt. Ah, you would? Take it, then!"

The blows were almost simultaneous—a savage swing which whistled past Montgomery's ear, and a straight drive which took the workman on the chin. Luck was with the assistant. That single whizzing uppercut, and the way in which it was delivered, warned him that he had a formidable man to deal with. But if he had underrated his antagonist, his antagonist had also underrated him, and had laid himself open to a fatal blow.

The miner's head had come with a crash against the corner of the surgery shelves, and he had dropped

heavily on to the ground. There he lay with his bandy legs drawn up and his hands thrown abroad, the blood trickling over the surgery tiles.

"Had enough?" asked the assistant, breathing fiercely through his nose.

But no answer came. The man was insensible. And when the danger of his position came upon Montgomery, and he turned as white as his antagonist. A Sunday, the immaculate Dr. Oldacre with his pious connection, a savage brawl with a patient; he would retrievably lose his situation if the facts came out. It was not much of a situation, but he could not get another without a reference, and Oldacre might refuse him one. Without money for his classes, and without a situation—what was to become of him? It was absolute ruin.

But perhaps he could escape exposure after all. He seized his insensible adversary, dragged him out into the centre of the room, loosened his collar, and squeezed the surgery sponge over his face. He sat up at last with a gasp and a scowl.

"Down thee, thou's spoilt my necktie," said he, mopping up the water from his breast.

"I'm sorry I hit you so hard," said Montgomery, apologetically.

"Thou hit me hard! I could stan' such fly-flappin' all day. 'Twas this here press that cracked my pate for me, and thou art a looky man to be able to boast as thou hast outed me. And now I'd be obliged to thee if thou wilt give me t' wife's medicine."

Montgomery gladly made it up and handed it to the miner.

"You are weak still," said he. "Won't you stay awhile and rest?"

"T' wife wants her medicine," said the man, and lurched out at the door.

The assistant, looking after him, saw him rolling with an uncertain step down the street, until a friend met him, and they walked on arm-in-arm. The man seemed in his rough Northern fashion to bear no grudge, and so Montgomery's fears left him. There was no reason why the doctor should know anything about it. He wiped the blood from the floor, put the surgery in order, and went on with his interrupted task, hoping that he had come scathless out of a very dangerous business.

Yet all day he was aware of a sense of vague uneasiness, which sharpened into dismay when, late in the afternoon, he was informed that three gentlemen had called and were waiting for him in the surgery. A coroner's inquest, a descent of detectives, an invasion of angry relatives—all sorts of possibilities rose to scare him. With tense nerves and a rigid face he went to meet his visitors.

They were a very singular trio. Each was known to him by sight; but what on earth the three could be doing together, and, above all, what they could expect from *him*, was a most inexplicable problem.

The first was Sorley Wilson, the son of the owner of the Nonpareil Coalpit. He was a young blood of

twenty, heir to a fortune, a keen sportsman, and down for the Easter Vacation from Magdalene College. He sat now upon the edge of the surgery table, looking in thoughtful silence at Montgomery, and twisting the ends of his small, black, waxed moustache.

The second was Purvis, the publican, owner of the chief beershop, and well known as the local book-maker. He was a coarse, clean-shaven man, whose fiery face made a singular contrast with his ivory-white bald head. He had shrewd, light-blue eyes with foxy lashes, and he also leaned forward in silence from his chair, a fat, red hand upon either knee, and stared critically at the young assistant.

So did the third visitor, Fawcett, the horsebreaker, who leaned back, his long, thin legs, with their box-cloth riding-gaiters, thrust out in front of him, tapping his protruding teeth with his riding-whip, with anxious thought in every line of his rugged, bony face. Publican, exquisite, and horsebreaker were all three equally silent, equally earnest, and equally critical. Montgomery, seated in the midst of them, looked from one to the other.

"Well, gentlemen?" he observed, but no answer came.

The position was embarrassing.

"No," said the horsebreaker, at last. "No. It's off. It's nowt."

"Stand oop, lad; let's see thee standin'." It was the publican who spoke.

Montgomery obeyed. He would learn all about it,

no doubt, if he were patient. He stood up and turned slowly round, as if in front of his tailor.

"It's off! It's off!" cried the horsebreaker. "Why, mon, the Master would break him over his knee."

"Oh, that be hanged for a yarn!" said the young Cantab. "You can drop out if you like, Fawcett, but I'll see this thing through, if I have to do it alone. I don't hedge a penny. I like the cut of him a great deal better than I liked Ted Barton."

"Look at Barton's shoulders, Mr. Wilson."

"Lumpiness isn't always strength. Give me nerve and fire and breed. That's what wins."

"Ay, sir, you have it theer—you have it theer!" said the fat, red-faced publican, in a thick, suety voice. "It's the same wi' poops. Get 'em clean-bred an' fine, an' they'll yark the thick 'uns—yark 'em out o' their skins."

"He's ten good pund on the light side," growled the horsebreaker.

"He's a welter weight, anyhow."

"A hundred and thirty."

"A hundred and fifty, if he's an ounce."

"Well, the Master doesn't scale much more than that."

"A hundred and seventy-five."

"That was when he was hog-fat and living high. Work the grease out of him, and I lay there's no great difference between them. Have you been weighed lately, Mr. Montgomery?"

It was the first direct question which had been

sked him. He had stood in the midst of them, like horse at a fair, and he was just beginning to wonder whether he was more angry or amused.

"I am just eleven stone," said he.

"I said that he was a welter weight."

"But suppose you was trained?" said the publican. "Wot then?"

"I am always in training."

"In a manner of speakin', no doubt, he *is* always in trainin'," remarked the horsebreaker. "But trainin' or everyday work ain't the same as trainin' with a rainer; and I dare bet, with all respec' to your opinion, Mr. Wilson, that there's half a stone of tallow on him t this minute."

The young Cantab put his fingers on the assistant's upper arm. Then with his other hand on his wrist he bent the forearm sharply, and felt the biceps, as round and hard as a cricket-ball, spring up under his fingers.

"Feel that!" said he.

The publican and horsebreaker felt it with an air of reverence.

"Good lad! He'll do yet!" cried Purvis.

"Gentlemen," said Montgomery, "I think that you will acknowledge that I have been very patient with you. I have listened to all that you have to say about my personal appearance, and now I must really beg that you will have the goodness to tell me what is the matter."

They all sat down in their serious, business-like way.

"That's easy done, Mr. Montgomery," said the

fat-voiced publican. "But before sayin' anything, we had to wait and see whether, in a way of speakin', there was any need for us to say anything at all. Mr. Wilson thinks there is. Mr. Fawcett, who has the same right to his opinion, bein' also a backer and one o' the committee, thinks the other way."

"I thought him too light built, and I think so now," said the horsebreaker, still tapping his prominent teeth with the metal head of his riding-whip. "But happen he may pull through; and he's a fine-made, buirdly young chap, so if you mean to back him, Mr. Wilson——"

"Which I do."

"And you, Purvis?"

"I ain't one to go back, Fawcett."

"Well, I'll stan' to my share of the purse."

"And well I knew you would," said Purvis, "for it would be somethin' new to find Isaac Fawcett as a spoil-sport. Well, then, we make up the hundred for the stake among us, and the fight stands—always supposin' the young man is willin'."

"Excuse all this rot, Mr. Montgomery," said the University man, in a genial voice. "We've begun at the wrong end, I know, but we'll soon straighten it out, and I hope that you will see your way to falling in with our views. In the first place, you remember the man whom you knocked out this morning? He is Barton—the famous Ted Barton."

"I'm sure, sir, you may well be proud to have outed him in one round," said the publican. "Why, it took

Morris, the ten-stone-six champion, a deal more trouble than that before he put Barton to sleep. You've done a fine performance, sir, and happen you'll do a finer, if you give yourself the chance."

"I never heard of Ted Barton, beyond seeing the name on a medicine label," said the assistant.

"Well, you may take it from me that he's a slaughterer," said the horsebreaker. "You've taught him a lesson that he needed, for it was always a word and a blow with him, and the word alone was worth five shillin' in a public court. He won't be so ready now to shake his nief in the face of everyone he meets. However, that's neither here nor there."

Montgomery looked at them in bewilderment.

"For goodness' sake, gentlemen, tell me what it is you want me to do!" he cried.

"We want you to fight Silas Craggs, better known as the Master of Croxley."

"But why?"

"Because Ted Barton was to have fought him next Saturday. He was the champion of the Wilson coal-pits, and the other was the Master of the iron-folk down at the Croxley smelters. We'd matched our man for a purse of a hundred against the Master. But you've queered our man, and he can't face such a battle with a two-inch cut at the back of his head. There's only one thing to be done, sir, and that is for you to take his place. If you can lick Ted Barton you may lick the Master of Croxley; but if you don't we're done, for there's no one else who is in the same street

with him in this district. It's twenty rounds, two-ounce gloves, Queensberry rules, and a decision on points if you fight to the finish."

For a moment the absurdity of the thing drove every other thought out of Montgomery's head. But then there came a sudden revulsion. A hundred pounds!—all he wanted to complete his education was lying there ready to his hand, if only that hand were strong enough to pick it up. He had thought bitterly that morning that there was no market for his strength, but here was one where his muscle might earn more in an hour than his brains in a year. But a chill of doubt came over him.

"How can I fight for the coal-pits?" said he. "I am not connected with them."

"Eh, lad, but thou art!" cried old Purvis. "We've got it down in writin', and it's clear enough. 'Any one connected with the coal-pits.' Doctor Oldacre is the coal-pit club doctor; thou art his assistant. What more can they want?"

"Yes, that's right enough," said the Cantab. "It would be a very sporting thing of you, Mr. Montgomery, if you would come to our help when we are in such a hole. Of course, you might not like to take the hundred pounds; but I have no doubt that, in the case of your winning, we could arrange that it should take the form of a watch or piece of plate, or any other shape which might suggest itself to you. You see, you are responsible for our having lost our champion, so we really feel that we have a claim upon you."

"Give me a moment, gentlemen. It is very unexpected. I am afraid the doctor would never consent to my going—in fact, I am sure that he would not."

"But he need never know—not before the fight, at any rate. We are not bound to give the name of our man. So long as he is within the weight limits on the day of the fight, that is all that concerns any one."

The adventure and the profit would either of them have attracted Montgomery. The two combined were irresistible.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I'll do it!"

The three sprang from their seats. The publican had seized his right hand, the horse-dealer his left, and the Cantab slapped him on the back.

"Good lad! good lad!" croaked the publican. "Eh mon, but if thou yark him, thou'll rise in one day from being just a common doctor to the best-known mon 'twixt here and Bradford. Thou art a witherin' tyke, thou art, and no mistake; and if thou beat the Master of Croxley, thou'll find all the beer thou want for the rest of thy life waiting for thee at the Four Sacks."

"It is the most sporting thing I ever heard of in my life," said young Wilson. "By George, sir, if you pull it off, you've got the constituency in your pocket, if you care to stand. You know the outhouse in my garden?"

"Next the road?"

"Exactly. I turned it into a gymnasium for Ted Barton. You'll find all you want there: clubs, punching ball, bars, dumb-bells, everything. Then you'll

want a sparring partner. Ogilvy has been acting for Barton, but we don't think that he is class enough. Barton bears you no grudge. He's a good-hearted fellow, though cross-grained with strangers. He looked upon you as a stranger this morning, but he says he knows you now. He is quite ready to spar with you for practice, and he will come at any hour you will name."

"Thank you; I will let you know the hour," said Montgomery; and so the committee departed jubilant upon their way.

The medical assistant sat for a little time in the surgery turning it over in his mind. He had been trained originally at the University by the man who had been middle-weight champion in his day. It was true that his teacher was long past his prime, slow upon his feet and stiff in his joints, but even so he was still a tough antagonist; but Montgomery had found at last that he could more than hold his own with him. He had won the University medal, and his teacher, who had trained so many students, was emphatic in his opinion that he had never had one who was in the same class with him. He had been exhorted to go in for the Amateur Championships, but he had no particular ambition in that direction. Once he had put on the gloves with Hammer Tunstall in a booth at a fair, and had fought three rattling rounds, in which he had the worst of it, but had made the prize-fighter stretch himself to the uttermost. There was his whole record, and was it enough to encourage him to stand up to the

Master of Croxley? He had never heard of the Master before, but then he had lost touch of the ring during the last few years of hard work. After all, what did it matter? If he won, there was the money, which meant so much to him. If he lost, it would only mean a thrashing. He could take punishment without flinching, of that he was certain. If there were only one chance in a hundred of pulling it off, then it was worth his while to attempt it.

Dr. Oldacre, new come from church, with an ostentatious Prayer-book in his kid-gloved hand, broke in upon his meditation.

"You don't go to service, I observe, Mr. Montgomery," said he, coldly.

"No, sir; I have had some business to detain me."

"It is very near to my heart that my household should set a good example. There are so few educated people in this district that a great responsibility devolves upon us. If we do not live up to the highest, how can we expect these poor workers to do so? It is a dreadful thing to reflect that the parish takes a great deal more interest in an approaching glove-fight than in their religious duties."

"A glove-fight, sir?" said Montgomery, guiltily.

"I believe that to be the correct term. One of my patients tells me that it is the talk of the district. A local ruffian, a patient of ours, by the way, is matched against a pugilist over at Croxley. I cannot understand why the law does not step in and stop so degrading an exhibition. It is really a prize-fight."

"A glove fight, you said."

"I am informed that a two-ounce glove is an evasion by which they dodge the law, and make it difficult for the police to interfere. They contend for a sum of money. It seems dreadful and almost incredible—does it not?—to think that such scenes can be enacted within a few miles of our peaceful home. But you will realize, Mr. Montgomery, that while there are such influences for us to counteract, it is very necessary that we should live up to our highest."

The doctor's sermon would have had more effect if the assistant had not once or twice had occasion to test his highest and come upon it at unexpectedly humble elevations. It is always so particularly easy to "compound for sins we're most inclined to by damning those we have no mind to". In any case, Montgomery felt that of all the men concerned in such a fight—promoters, backers, spectators—it is the actual fighter who holds the strongest and most honourable position. His conscience gave him no concern upon the subject. Endurance and courage are virtues, not vices, and brutality is, at least, better than effeminacy.

There was a little tobacco-shop at the corner of the street, where Montgomery got his bird's-eye and also his local information, for the shopman was a garrulous soul, who knew everything about the affairs of the district. The assistant strolled down there after tea and asked, in a casual way, whether the tobacconist had ever heard of the Master of Croxley.

"Heard of him! Heard of him!" the little man

could hardly articulate in his astonishment. "Why, sir, he's the first mon o' the district, an' his name's as well known in the West Riding as the winner o' t' Derby. But Lor', sir"—here he stopped and rummaged among a heap of papers. "They are makin' a fuss about him on account o' his fight wi' Ted Barton, and so the *Croxley Herald* has his life an' record, an' here it is, an' thou canst read it for thyself."

The sheet of the paper which he held up was a lake of print around an islet of illustration. The latter was a coarse wood-cut of a pugilist's head and neck set in a cross-barred jersey. It was a sinister but powerful face, the face of a debauched hero, clean-shaven, strongly eyebrowed, keen-eyed, with a huge, aggressive jaw and an animal dewlap beneath it. The long, obstinate cheeks ran flush up to the narrow, sinister eyes. The mighty neck came down square from the ears and curved outwards into shoulders, which had lost nothing at the hands of the local artist. Above was written "Silas Craggs", and beneath, "The Master of Croxley".

"Thou'll find all about him there, sir," said the tobacconist. "He's a witherin' tyke, he is, and we're proud to have him in the county. If he hadn't broke his leg he'd have been champion of England."

"Broke his leg, has he?"

"Yes, and it set badly. They ca' him owd K behind his back, for thot is how his two legs look. But his arms—well, if they was both stropped to a bench, as the sayin' is, I wonder where the champion of England would be then."

"I'll take this with me," said Montgomery; and putting the paper into his pocket he returned home.

It was not a cheering record which he read there. The whole history of the Croxley Master was given in full, his many victories, his few defeats.

"Born in 1857," said the provincial biographer, "Silas Craggs, better known in sporting circles as The Master of Croxley, is now in his fortieth year."

"Hang it, I'm only twenty-three," said Montgomery to himself, and read on more cheerfully.

"Having in his youth shown a surprising aptitude for the game, he fought his way up among his comrades, until he became the recognized champion of the district and won the proud title which he still holds. Ambitious of a more than local fame, he secured a patron, and fought his first fight against Jack Barton, of Birmingham, in May, 1880, at the old Loiterers' Club. Craggs, who fought at ten-stone-two at the time, had the better of fifteen rattling rounds, and gained an award on points against the Midlander. Having disposed of James Dunn, of Rotherhithe, Cameron, of Glasgow, and a youth named Fernie, he was thought so highly of by the fancy that he was matched against Ernest Willox, at that time middle-weight champion of the North of England, and defeated him in a hard-fought battle, knocking him out in the tenth round after a punishing contest. At this period it looked as if the very highest honours of the ring were within the reach of the young Yorkshireman, but he was laid upon the shelf by a most unfortunate accident. The

kick of a horse broke his thigh, and for a year he was compelled to rest himself. When he returned to his work the fracture had set badly, and his activity was much impaired. It was owing to this that he was defeated in seven rounds by Willox, the man whom he had previously beaten, and afterwards by James Shaw, of London, though the latter acknowledged that he had found the toughest customer of his career. Undismayed by his reverses, the Master adapted the style of his fighting to his physical disabilities and resumed his career of victory—defeating Norton (the black), Bobby Wilson, and Levi Cohen, the latter a heavy-weight. Conceding two stone, he fought a draw with the famous Billy McQuire, and afterwards, for a purse of fifty pounds, he defeated Sam Hare at the Pelican Club, London. In 1891 a decision was given against him upon a foul when fighting a winning fight against Jim Taylor, the Australian middle-weight, and so mortified was he by the decision, that he withdrew from the ring. Since then he has hardly fought at all save to accommodate any local aspirant who may wish to learn the difference between a bar-room scramble and a scientific contest. The latest of these ambitious souls comes from the Wilson coal-pits, which have undertaken to put up a stake of £100 and back their local champion. There are various rumours afloat as to who their representative is to be, the name of Ted Barton being freely mentioned; but the betting, which is seven to one on the Master against any untried man, is a fair reflection of the feeling of the community."

Montgomery read it over twice, and it left him with a very serious face. No light matter this which he had undertaken; no battle with a rough-and-tumble fighter who presumed upon a local reputation. The man's record showed that he was first-class—or nearly so. There were a few points in his favour, and he must make the most of them. There was age—twenty-three against forty. There was an old ring proverb that "Youth will be served", but the annals of the ring offer a great number of exceptions. A hard veteran, full of cool valour and ring-craft, could give ten or fifteen years and a beating to most striplings. He could not rely too much upon his advantage in age. But then there was the lameness; that must surely count for a great deal. And, lastly, there was the chance that the Master might underrate his opponent, that he might be remiss in his training, and refuse to abandon his usual way of life, if he thought that he had an easy task before him. In a man of his age and habits this seemed very possible. Montgomery prayed that it might be so. Meanwhile, if his opponent were the best man who ever jumped the ropes into a ring, his own duty was clear. He must prepare himself carefully, throw away no chance, and do the very best that he could. But he knew enough to appreciate the difference which exists in boxing, as in every sport, between the amateur and the professional. The coolness, the power of hitting, above all the capability of taking punishment, count for so much. Those specially developed, gutta-percha-like abdominal muscles of the

hardened pugilist will take without flinching a blow which would leave another man writhing on the ground. Such things are not to be acquired in a week, but all that could be done in a week should be done.

The medical assistant had a good basis to start from. He was 5 feet 11 inches—tall enough for anything on two legs, as the old ring men used to say—lithe and spare, with the activity of a panther, and a strength which had hardly ever yet found its limitations. His muscular development was finely hard, but his power came rather from that higher nerve-energy which counts for nothing upon a measuring tape. He had the well-curved nose and the widely-opened eye which never yet were seen upon the face of a craven, and behind everything he had the driving force, which came from the knowledge that his whole career was at stake upon the contest. The three backers rubbed their hands when they saw him at work punching the ball in the gymnasium next morning; and Fawcett, the horsebreaker, who had written to Leeds to hedge his bets, sent a wire to cancel the letter, and to lay another fifty at the market price of seven to one.

Montgomery's chief difficulty was to find time for his training without any interference from the doctor. His work took him a large part of the day, but as the visiting was done on foot, and considerable distances had to be traversed, it was a training in itself. For the rest, he punched the swinging ball and worked with the dumb-bells for an hour every morning and evening, and boxed twice a day with Ted Barton in the

gymnasium, gaining as much profit as could be got from a rushing, two-handed slogger. Barton was full of admiration for his cleverness and quickness, but doubtful about his strength. Hard hitting was the feature of his own style, and he exacted it from others.

"Lord, sir, that's a turble poor poonch for an eleven-stone man!" he would cry. "Thou wilt have to hit harder than that afore t' Master will know that thou art theer. Ah, thot's better, mon, thot's fine!" he would add, as his opponent lifted him across the room on the end of a right counter. "Thot's how I likes to feel 'em. Happen thou'lt pull through yet." He chuckled with joy when Montgomery knocked him into a corner. "Eh, mon, thou art comin' along grand. Thou hast fair yarked me off my legs. Do it again, lad, do it again!"

The only part of Montgomery's training which came within the doctor's observation was his diet, and that puzzled him considerably.

"You will excuse my remarking, Mr. Montgomery, that you are becoming rather particular in your tastes. Such fads are not to be encouraged in one's youth. Why do you eat toast with every meal?"

"I find that it suits me better than bread, sir."

"It entails unnecessary work upon the cook. I observe, also, that you have turned against potatoes."

"Yes, sir; I think that I am better without them."

"And you no longer drink your beer?"

"No, sir."

"These causeless whims and fancies are very much

to be deprecated, Mr. Montgomery. Consider how many there are to whom these very potatoes and this very beer would be most acceptable."

"No doubt, sir. But at present I prefer to do without them."

They were sitting alone at lunch, and the assistant thought that it would be a good opportunity of asking leave for the day of the fight.

"I should be glad if you could let me have leave for Saturday, Doctor Oldacre."

"It is very inconvenient upon so busy a day."

"I should do a double day's work on Friday so as to leave everything in order. I should hope to be back in the evening."

"I am afraid I cannot spare you, Mr. Montgomery."

This was a facer. If he could not get leave he would go without it.

"You will remember, Doctor Oldacre, that when I came to you it was understood that I should have a clear day every month. I have never claimed one. But now there are reasons why I wish to have a holiday upon Saturday."

Doctor Oldacre gave in with a very bad grace.

"Of course, if you insist upon your formal rights, there is no more to be said, Mr. Montgomery, though I feel that it shows a certain indifference to my comfort and the welfare of the practice. Do you still insist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. I have your way."

The doctor was boiling over with anger, but Montgomery was a valuable assistant—steady, capable, and hard-working—and he could not afford to lose him. Even if he had been prompted to advance those class fees, for which his assistant had appealed, it would have been against his interests to do so, for he did not wish him to qualify, and he desired him to remain in his subordinate position, in which he worked so hard for so small a wage. There was something in the cool insistence of the young man, a quiet resolution in his voice as he claimed his Saturday, which aroused his curiosity.

"I have no desire to interfere unduly with your affairs, Mr. Montgomery, but were you thinking of having a day in Leeds upon Saturday?"

"No, sir."

"In the country?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are very wise. You will find a quiet day among the wild flowers a very valuable restorative. Had you thought of any particular direction?"

"I am going over Croxley way."

"Well, there is no prettier country when once you are past the iron-works. What could be more delightful than to lie upon the Fells, basking in the sunshine, with perhaps some instructive and elevating book as your companion? I should recommend a visit to the ruins of St. Bridget's Church, a very interesting relic of the early Norman era. By the way, there is one

objection which I see to your going to Croxley on Saturday. It is upon that date, as I am informed, that that ruffianly glove-fight takes place. You may find yourself molested by the blackguards whom it will attract."

"I will take my chance of that, sir," said the assistant.

On the Friday night, which was the last before the fight, Montgomery's three backers assembled in the gymnasium and inspected their man as he went through some light exercises to keep his muscles supple. He was certainly in splendid condition, his skin shining with health, and his eyes with energy and confidence. The three walked round him and exulted.

"He's simply ripping!" said the undergraduate. "By gad, you've come out of it splendidly. You're as hard as a pebble, and fit to fight for your life."

"Happen he's a trifle on the fine side," said the publican. "Runs a bit light at the loins, to my way of thinkin'."

"What weight to-day?"

"Ten stone eleven," the assistant answered.

"That's only three pund off in a week's trainin'," said the horsebreaker. "He said right when he said that he was in condition. Well, it's fine stuff all there is of it, but I'm none so sure as there is enough." He kept poking his finger into Montgomery, as if he were one of his horses. "I hear that the Master will scale a hundred and sixty odd at the ring-side."

"But there's some of that which he'd like well to pull off and leave behind wi' his shirt," said Purvis. "I hear they've had a rare job to get him to drop his beer, and if it had not been for that great red-headed wench of his they'd never ha' done it. 'She fair scratted the face off a potman that had brought him a gallon from t' Chequers. They say the hussy is his sparrin' partner, as well as his sweetheart, and that his poor wife is just breakin' her heart over it. Hullo, young 'un, what do you want?"

The door of the gymnasium had opened, and a lad about sixteen, grimy and black with soot and iron, stepped into the yellow glare of the oil-lamp. Ted Barton seized him by the collar.

"See here, thou young whelp, this is private and we want noan o' thy spyin'!"

"But I maun speak to Mr. Wilson."

The young Cantab stepped forward.

"Well, my lad, what is it?"

"It's about t' fight, Mr. Wilson, sir. I wanted to tell your mon somethin' about t' Maister."

"We've no time to listen to gossip, my boy. We know all about the Master."

"But thou doant, sir. Nobody knows but me and mother, and we thought as we'd like thy mon to know, sir, for we want him to fair bray him."

"Oh, you want the Master fair brayed, do you? So do we. Well, what have you to say?"

"Is this your mon, sir?"

"Well, suppose it is?"

"Then it's him I want to tell about it. T' Maister is blind o' the left eye."

"Nonsense!"

"It's true, sir. Not stone blind, but rarely fogged. He keeps it secret, but mother knows, and so do I. If thou slip him on the left side he can't cop thee. Thou'll find it right as I tell thee. And mark him when he sinks his right. 'Tis his best blow, his right upper-cut. T' Maister's finisher, they ca' it at t' works. It's a turble blow, when it do come home."

"Thank you, my boy. This is information worth having about his sight," said Wilson. "How came you to know so much? Who are you?"

"I'm his son, sir."

Wilson whistled.

"And who sent you to us?"

"My mother. I maun get back to her again."

"Take this half-crown."

"No, sir, I don't seek money in comin' here. I do it——"

"For love?" suggested the publican.

"For hate!" said the boy, and darted off into the darkness.

"Seems to me t' red-headed wench may do him more harm than good, after all," remarked the publican. "And now, Mr. Montgomery, sir, you've done enough for this evenin', an' a nine-hours' sleep is the best trainin' before a battle. Happen this time tomorrow night you'll be safe back again with your £100 in your pocket."

II

Work was struck at one o'clock at the coal-pits and the iron-works, and the fight was arranged for three. From the Croxley Furnaces, from Wilson's Coal-pits, from the Heartsease Mine, from the Dodd Mills, from the Leverworth Smelters the workmen came trooping, each with his fox-terrier or his lurcher at his heels. Warped with labour and twisted by toil, bent double by week-long work in the cramped coal galleries, or half-blinded with years spent in front of white-hot fluid metal, these men still gilded their harsh and hopeless lives by their devotion to sport. It was their one relief, the only thing which could distract their minds from sordid surroundings, and give them an interest beyond the blackened circle which inclosed them. Literature, art, science, all these things were beyond their horizon; but the race, the football match, the cricket, the fight, these were things which they could understand, which they could speculate upon in advance and comment upon afterwards. Sometimes brutal, sometimes grotesque, the love of sport is still one of the great agencies which make for the happiness of our people. It lies very deeply in the springs of our nature, and when it has been educated out, a higher, more refined nature may be left, but it will not be of that robust British type which has left its mark so deeply on the world. Every one of these ruddled workers, slouching with his dog at his heels to see something of the fight, was a true unit of his race.

It was a squally May day, with bright sunbursts and driving showers. Montgomery worked all morning in the surgery getting his medicine made up.

"The weather seems so very unsettled, Mr. Montgomery," remarked the doctor, "that I am inclined to think that you had better postpone your little country excursion until a later date."

"I am afraid that I must go to-day, sir."

"I have just had an intimation that Mrs. Potter, at the other side of Angleton, wishes to see me. It is probable that I shall be there all day. It will be extremely inconvenient to leave the house empty so long."

"I am very sorry, sir, but I must go," said the assistant, doggedly.

The doctor saw that it would be useless to argue, and departed in the worst of bad tempers upon his mission. Montgomery felt easier now that he was gone. He went up to his room, and packed his running-shoes, his fighting-drawers, and his cricket-sash into a handbag. When he came down Mr. Wilson was waiting for him in the surgery.

"I hear the doctor has gone."

"Yes; he is likely to be away all day."

"I don't see that it matters much. It's bound to come to his ears by to-night."

"Yes; it's serious with me, Mr. Wilson. If I win, it's all right. I don't mind telling you that the hundred pounds will make all the difference to me. But if I lose, I shall lose my situation, for, as you say, I can't keep it secret."

"Never mind. We'll see you through among us. I only wonder the doctor has not heard, for it's all over the country that you are to fight the Croxley Champion. We've had Armitage up about it already. He's the Master's backer, you know. He wasn't sure that you were eligible. The Master said he wanted you whether you were eligible or not. Armitage has money on, and would have made trouble if he could. But I showed him that you came within the conditions of the challenge, and he agreed that it was all right. They think they have a soft thing on."

"Well, I can only do my best," said Montgomery.

They lunched together; a silent and rather nervous repast, for Montgomery's mind was full of what was before him, and Wilson had himself more money at stake than he cared to lose.

Wilson's carriage and pair were at the door, the horses with blue-and-white rosettes at their ears, which were the colours of the Wilson Coal-pits, well known on many a football field. At the avenue gate a crowd of some hundred pit-men and their wives gave a cheer as the carriage passed. To the assistant it all seemed dream-like and extraordinary—the strangest experience of his life, but with a thrill of human action and interest in it which made it passionately absorbing. He lay back in the open carriage and saw the fluttering handkerchiefs from the doors and windows of the miners' cottages. Wilson had pinned a blue-and-white rosette upon his coat, and every one knew him as their champion. "Good luck, sir! good luck to thee!"

they shouted from the roadside. He felt that it was like some unromantic knight riding down to sordid lists, but there was something of chivalry in it all the same. He fought for others as well as for himself. He might fail from want of skill or strength, but deep in his sombre soul he vowed that it should never be for want of heart.

Mr. Fawcett was just mounting into his high-wheeled, spidery dogcart, with his little bit of blood between the shafts. He waved his whip and fell in behind the carriage. They overtook Purvis, the tomato-faced publican, upon the road, with his wife in her Sunday bonnet. They also dropped into the procession, and then, as they traversed the seven miles of the high-road to Croxley, their two-horsed, rosetted carriage became gradually the nucleus of a comet with a loosely radiating tail. From every side-road came the miners' carts, the humble, ramshackle traps, black and bulging, with their loads of noisy, foul-tongued, open-hearted partisans. They trailed for a long quarter of a mile behind them—cracking, whipping, shouting, galloping, swearing. Horsemen and runners were mixed with the vehicles. And then suddenly a squad of the Sheffield Yeomanry, who were having their annual training in those parts, clattered and jingled out of a field, and rode as an escort to the carriage. Through the dust-clouds round him Montgomery saw the gleaming brass helmets, the bright coats, and the tossing heads of the chargers, the delighted brown faces of the troopers. It was more dream-like than ever.

And then, as they approached the monstrous, uncouth line of bottle-shaped buildings which marked the smelting-works of Croxley, their long, writhing snake of dust was headed off by another but longer one which wound across their path. The main-road into which their own opened was filled by the rushing current of traps. The Wilson contingent halted until the others should get past. The iron-men cheered and groaned, according to their humour, as they whirled past their antagonist. Rough chaff flew back and forwards like iron nuts and splinters of coal. "Brought him up, then!" "Got t' hearse for to fetch him back?" "Where's t' owd K-legs?" "Mon, mon, have thy photograph took—'twill mind thee of what thou used to look!" "He fight?—he's now't but a half-baked doctor!" "Happen he'll doctor thy Croxley Champion afore he's through wi't."

So they flashed at each other as the one side waited and the other passed. Then there came a rolling murmur swelling into a shout, and a great brake with four horses came clattering along, all streaming with salmon-pink ribbons. The driver wore a white hat with pink rosette, and beside him, on the high seat, were a man and a woman—she with her arm round his waist. Montgomery had one glimpse of them as they flashed past: he with a furry cap drawn low over his brow, a great frieze coat, and a pink comforter round his throat; she brazen, red-headed, bright-coloured, laughing excitedly. The Master, for it was he, turned as he passed, gazed hard at Montgomery,

and gave him a menacing, gap-toothed grin. It was a hard, wicked face, blue-jowled and craggy, with long, obstinate cheeks and inexorable eyes. The brake behind was full of patrons of the sport—flushed iron-foremen, heads of departments, managers. One was drinking from a metal flask, and raised it to Montgomery as he passed; and then the crowd thinned, and the Wilson *cortège* with their dragoons swept in at the rear of the others.

The road led away from Croxley, between curving green hills, gashed and polluted by the searchers for coal and iron. The whole country had been gutted, and vast piles of refuse and mountains of slag suggested the mighty chambers which the labour of man had burrowed beneath. On the left the road curved up to where a huge building, roofless and dismantled, stood crumbling and forlorn, with the light shining through the windowless squares.

"That's the old Arrowsmith's factory. That's where the fight is to be," said Wilson. "How are you feeling now?"

"Thank you. I was never better in my life," Montgomery answered.

"By Gad, I like your nerve!" said Wilson, who was himself flushed and uneasy. "You'll give us a fight for our money, come what may. That place on the right is the office, and that has been set aside as the dressing and weighing-room."

The carriage drove up to it amidst the shouts of the folk upon the hillside. Lines of empty carriages

and traps curved down upon the winding road, and a black crowd surged round the door of the ruined factory. The seats, as a huge placard announced, were five shillings, three shillings, and a shilling, with half-price for dogs. The takings, deducting expenses, were to go to the winner, and it was already evident that a larger stake than a hundred pounds was in question. A babel of voices rose from the door. The workers wished to bring their dogs in free. The men scuffled. The dogs barked. The crowd was a whirling, eddying pool surging with a roar up to the narrow cleft which was its only outlet.

The brake, with its salmon-coloured streamers and four reeking horses, stood empty before the door of the office; Wilson, Purvis, Fawcett, and Montgomery passed in.

There was a large, bare room inside with square, clean patches upon the grimy walls where pictures and almanacs had once hung. Worn linoleum covered the floor, but there was no furniture save some benches and a deal table with a ewer and a basin upon it. Two of the corners were curtained off. In the middle of the room was a weighing-chair. A hugely fat man, with a salmon tie and a blue waistcoat with birds'-eye spots, came bustling up to them. It was Armitage, the butcher and grazier, well known for miles round as a warm man, and the most liberal patron of sport in the Riding.

"Well, well," he grunted, in a thick, fussy, wheezy voice, "you have come, then. Got your man? Got your man?"

"Here he is, fit and well. Mr. Montgomery, let me present you to Mr. Armitage."

"Glad to meet you, sir. Happy to make your acquaintance. I make bold to say, sir, that we of Croxley admire your courage, Mr. Montgomery, and that our only hope is a fair fight and no favour and the best man win. That's our sentiment at Croxley."

"And it is my sentiment also," said the assistant.

"Well, you can't say fairer than that, Mr. Montgomery. You've taken a large contrac' in hand, but a large contrac' may be carried through, sir, as any one that knows my dealings could testify. The Master is ready to weigh in!"

"So am I."

"You must weigh in the buff."

Montgomery looked askance at the tall, red-headed woman who was standing gazing out of the window.

"That's all right," said Wilson. "Get behind the curtain and put on your fighting-kit."

He did so, and came out the picture of an athlete, in white, loose drawers, canvas shoes, and the sash of a well-known cricket club round his waist. He was trained to a hair, his skin gleaming like silk, and every muscle rippling down his broad shoulders and along his beautiful arms as he moved them. They bunched into ivory knobs, or slid into long, sinuous curves, as he raised or lowered his hands.

"What thinkest thou o' that?" asked Ted Barton, his second, of the woman in the window.

She glanced contemptuously at the young athlete.

"It's but a poor kindness thou dost him to put a thread-paper yoong gentleman like yon against a mon as is a mon. Why, my Jock would throttle him wi' one hond lashed behind him."

"Happen he may—happen not," said Barton. "I have but twa pund in the world, but it's on him, every penny, and no hedgin'. But here's t' Maister, and rarely fine he do look."

The prize-fighter had come out from his curtain, a squat, formidable figure, monstrous in chest and arms, limping slightly on his distorted leg. His skin had none of the freshness and clearness of Montgomery's, but was dusky and mottled, with one huge mole amid the mat of tangled black hair which thatched his mighty breast. His weight bore no relation to his strength, for those huge shoulders and great arms, with brown, sledge-hammer fists, would have fitted the heaviest man that ever threw his cap into a ring. But his loins and legs were slight in proportion. Montgomery, on the other hand, was as symmetrical as a Greek statue. It would be an encounter between a man who was specially fitted for one sport, and one who was equally capable of any. The two looked curiously at each other: a bulldog, and a high-bred, clean-limbed terrier, each full of spirit.

"How do you do?"

"How do?" The Master grinned again, and his three jagged front teeth gleamed for an instant. The rest had been beaten out of him in twenty years of battle. He spat upon the floor. "We have a rare fine day for't."

"Capital," said Montgomery.

"That's the good feelin' I like," wheezed the fat butcher. "Good lads, both of them!—prime lads!—hard meat an' good bone. There's no ill-feelin'."

"If he downs me, Gawd bless him!" said the Master.

"An' if we down him, Gawd help him!" interrupted the woman.

"Haud thy tongue, wench!" said the Master, impatiently. "Who art thou to put in thy word? Happen I might draw my hand across thy face."

The woman did not take the threat amiss.

"Wilt have enough for thy hand to do, Jock," said she. "Get quit o' this gradely man afore thou turn on me."

The lovers' quarrel was interrupted by the entrance of a newcomer, a gentleman with a fur-collared overcoat and a very shiny top-hat—a top-hat of a degree of glossiness which is seldom seen five miles from Hyde Park. This hat he wore at the extreme back of his head, so that the lower surface of the brim made a kind of frame for his high, bald forehead, his keen eyes, his rugged and yet kindly face. He bustled in with the quiet air of possession with which the ring-master enters the circus.

"It's Mr. Stapleton, the referee from London," said Wilson.

"How do you do, Mr. Stapleton? I was introduced to you at the big fight at the Corinthian Club, in Piccadilly."

"Ah, I dare say," said the other, shaking hands. "Fact is, I'm introduced to so many that I can't undertake to carry their names. Wilson, is it? Well, Mr. Wilson, glad to see you. Couldn't get a fly at the station, and that's why I'm late."

"I'm sure, sir," said Armitage, "we should be proud that any one so well known in the boxing world should come down to our little exhibition."

"Not at all. Not at all. Anything in the interests of boxin'. All ready? Men weighed?"

"Weighing now, sir."

"Ah, just as well I should see it done. Seen you before, Craggs. Saw you fight your second battle against Willox. You had beaten him once, but he came back on you. What does the indicator say?—one hundred and sixty-three pounds—two off for the kit—one hundred and sixty-one. Now, my lad, you jump. My goodness, what colours are you wearing?"

"The Anonymi Cricket Club."

"What right have you to wear them? I belong to the club myself."

"So do I."

"You an amateur?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are fighting for a money prize?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you know what you are doing? You realize that you're a professional pug from this onwards, and that if ever you fight again——"

"I'll never fight again."

"Happen you won't," said the woman, and the Master turned a terrible eye upon her.

"Well, I suppose you know your own business best. Up you jump. One hundred and fifty-one, minus two, one hundred and forty-nine—twelve pounds difference, but youth and condition on the other scale. Well, the sooner we get to work the better, for I wish to catch the seven o'clock express at Hellifield. Twenty three-minute rounds, with one minute intervals, and Queensberry rules. Those are the conditions, are they not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good, then, we may go across."

The two combatants had overcoats thrown over their shoulders, and the whole party, backers, fighters, seconds, and the referee, filed out of the room. A police inspector was waiting for them in the road. He had a notebook in his hand—that terrible weapon which awes even the London cabman.

"I must take your names, gentlemen, in case it should be necessary to proceed for breach of peace."

"You don't mean to stop the fight?" cried Armitage, in a passion of indignation. "I'm Mr. Armitage, of Croxley, and this is Mr. Wilson, and we'll be responsible that all is fair and as it should be."

"I'll take the names in case it should be necessary to proceed," said the inspector, impassively.

"But you know me well."

"If you was a dook or even a judge it would be all the same," said the inspector. "It's the law, and

there's an end. I'll not take upon myself to stop the fight, seeing that gloves are to be used, but I'll take the names of all concerned. Silas Craggs, Robert Montgomery, Edward Barton, James Stapleton, of London. Who seconds Silas Craggs?"

"I do," said the woman. "Yes, you can stare, but it's my job, and no one else's. Anastasia's the name—four a's."

"Craggs?"

"Johnson. Anastasia Johnson. If you jug him, you can jug me."

"Who talked of juggin', ye fool?" growled the Master. "Coom on, Mr. Armitage, for I'm fair sick o' this loiterin'."

The inspector fell in with the procession, and proceeded, as they walked up the hill, to bargain in his official capacity for a front seat, where he could safeguard the interests of the law, and in his private capacity to lay out thirty shillings at seven to one with Mr. Armitage. Through the door they passed, down a narrow lane walled with a dense bank of humanity, up a wooden ladder to a platform, over a rope which was slung waist-high from four corner-stakes, and then Montgomery realized that he was in that ring in which his immediate destiny was to be worked out. On the stake at one corner there hung a blue-and-white streamer. Barton led him across, the overcoat dangling loosely from his shoulders, and he sat down on a wooden stool. Barton and another man, both wearing white sweaters, stood beside him. The so-

lled ring was a square, twenty feet each way. At the opposite angle was the sinister figure of the Master, with his red-headed woman and a rough-faced friend to look after him. At each corner were metal basins, pitchers of water, and sponges.

During the hubbub and uproar of the entrance Montgomery was too bewildered to take things in. But now there was a few minutes' delay, for the referee had lingered behind, and so he looked quietly about him. It was a sight to haunt him for a lifetime. Wooden seats had been built in, sloping upwards to the tops of the walls. Above, instead of a ceiling, a great flight of crows passed slowly across a square of grey cloud. Right up to the topmost benches the folk were banked—broadcloth in front, corduroys and fustian behind; faces turned everywhere upon him. The grey reek of the pipes filled the building, and the air was pungent with the acrid smell of cheap, strong tobacco. Everywhere among the human faces were to be seen the heads of the dogs. They growled and yapped from the back benches. In that dense mass of humanity one could hardly pick out individuals, but Montgomery's eyes caught the brazen gleam of the helmets held upon the knees of the ten yeomen of his escort. At the very edge of the platform sat the reporters, five of them: three locals, and two all the way from London. But where was the all-important referee? There was no sign of him, unless he were in the centre of that angry swirl of men near the door.

Mr. Stapleton had stopped to examine the gloves

which were to be used, and entered the building after the combatants. He had started to come down that narrow lane with the human walls which led to the ring. But already it had gone abroad that the Wilson champion was a gentleman, and that another gentleman had been appointed as referee. A wave of suspicion passed through the Croxley folk. They would have one of their own people for a referee. They would not have a stranger. His path was stopped as he made for the ring. Excited men flung themselves in front of him; they waved their fists in his face and cursed him. A woman howled vile names in his ear. Somebody struck at him with an umbrella. "Go thou back to Lunnon. We want noan o' thee. Go thou back!" they yelled.

Stapleton, with his shiny hat cocked backwards, and his large, bulging forehead swelling from under it, looked round him from beneath his bushy brows. He was in the centre of a savage and dangerous mob. Then he drew his watch from his pocket and held it dial upwards in his palm.

"In three minutes," said he, "I will declare the fight off."

They raged round him. His cool face and that aggressive top-hat irritated them. Grimy hands were raised. But it was difficult, somehow, to strike a man who was so absolutely indifferent.

"In two minutes I declare the fight off."

They exploded into blasphemy. The breath of angry men smoked into his placid face. A gnarled, grimy fist

vibrated at the end of his nose. "We tell thee we want noan o' thec. Get thou back where thou com'st from."

"In one minute I declare the fight off."

Then the calm persistence of the man conquered the swaying, mutable, passionate crowd.

"Let him through, mon. Happen there'll be no fight after a'."

"Let him through."

"Bill, thou loomp, let him pass. Dost want the fight declared off?"

"Make room for the referee!—room for the Lunnon referee!"

And half pushed, half carried, he was swept up to the ring. There were two chairs by the side of it, one for him and one for the timekeeper. He sat down, his hands on his knees, his hat at a more wonderful angle than ever, impassive but solemn, with the aspect of one who appreciates his responsibilities.

Mr. Armitage, the portly butcher, made his way into the ring and held up two fat hands, sparkling with rings, as a signal for silence.

"Gentlemen!" he yelled. And then in a crescendo shriek, "Gentlemen!"

"And ladies!" cried somebody, for indeed there was a fair sprinkling of women among the crowd. "Speak up, owd man!" shouted another. "What price pork chops?" cried somebody at the back. Everybody laughed, and the dogs began to bark. Armitage waved his hands amidst the uproar as if

he were conducting an orchestra. At last the babel thinned into silence.

"Gentlemen," he yelled, "the match is between Silas Craggs, whom we call the Master of Croxley, and Robert Montgomery, of the Wilson Coal-pits. The match was to be under eleven-eight. When they were weighed just now Craggs weighed eleven seven, and Montgomery ten nine. The conditions of the contest are—the best of twenty three-minute rounds with two-ounce gloves. Should the fight run to its full length it will, of course, be decided upon points. Mr. Stapleton, the well-known London referee, has kindly consented to see fair play. I wish to say that Mr. Wilson and I, the chief backers of the two men, have every confidence in Mr. Stapleton, and that we beg that you will accept his rulings without dispute."

He then turned from one combatant to the other, with a wave of his hand.

III

"Montgomery—Craggs!" said he.

A great hush fell over the huge assembly. Even the dogs stopped yapping; one might have thought that the monstrous room was empty. The two men had stood up, the small white gloves over their hands. They advanced from their corners and shook hands: Montgomery gravely, Craggs with a smile. Then they fell into position. The crowd gave a long sigh—the intake of a thousand excited breaths. The referee

tilted his chair on to its back legs, and looked moodily critical from the one to the other.

It was strength against activity—that was evident from the first. The Master stood stolidly upon his K-leg. It gave him a tremendous pedestal; one could hardly imagine his being knocked down. And he could pivot round upon it with extraordinary quickness; but his advance or retreat was ungainly. His frame, however, was so much larger and broader than that of the student, and his brown, massive face looked so resolute and menacing, that the hearts of the Wilson party sank within them. There was one heart, however, which had not done so. It was that of Robert Montgomery.

Any nervousness which he may have had completely passed away now that he had his work before him. Here was something definite—this hard-faced, deformed Hercules to beat, with a career as the price of beating him. He glowed with the joy of action; it thrilled through his nerves. He faced his man with little in-and-out steps, breaking to the left, breaking to the right, feeling his way, while Craggs, with a dull, malignant eye, pivoted slowly upon his weak leg, his left arm half extended, his right sunk low across the mark. Montgomery led with his left, and then led again, getting lightly home each time. He tried again, but the Master had his counter ready, and Montgomery reeled back from a harder blow than he had given. Anastasia, the woman, gave a shrill cry of encouragement, and her man let fly his right. Mont-

gomery ducked under it, and in an instant the two were in each other's arms.

"Break away! Break away!" said the referee.

The Master struck upwards on the break, and shook Montgomery with the blow. Then it was "time". It had been a spirited opening round. The people buzzed into comment and applause. Montgomery was quite fresh, but the hairy chest of the Master was rising and falling. The man passed a sponge over his head, while Anastasia flapped the towel before him. "Good lass! Good lass!" cried the crowd, and cheered her.

The men were up again, the Master grimly watchful, Montgomery as alert as a kitten. The Master tried a sudden rush, squatting along with his awkward gait, but coming faster than one would think. The student slipped aside and avoided him. The Master stopped, grinned, and shook his head. Then he motioned with his hand as an invitation to Montgomery to come to him. The student did so and led with his left, but got a swinging right counter in the ribs in exchange. The heavy blow staggered him, and the Master came scrambling in to complete his advantage; but Montgomery, with his greater activity kept out of danger until the call of "time". A tame round, and the advantage with the Master.

"T' Maister's too strong for him," said a smelter to his neighbour.

"Ay; but t'other's a likely lad. Happen we'll see some sport yet. He can joomp rarely."

"But t' Maister can stop and hit rarely. Happen he'll mak' him joomp when he gets his nief upon him."

They were up again, the water glistening upon their faces. Montgomery led instantly and got his right home with a sounding smack upon the Master's forehead. There was a shout from the colliers, and "Silence! Order!" from the referee. Montgomery avoided the counter and scored with his left. Fresh applause, and the referee upon his feet in indignation. "No comments, gentlemen, if *you* please, during the rounds."

"Just bide a bit!" growled the Master.

"Don't talk—fight!" said the referee, angrily.

Montgomery rubbed in the point by a flush hit upon the mouth, and the Master shambled back to his corner like an angry bear, having had all the worst of the round.

"Where's thot seven to one?" shouted Purvis, the publican. "I'll take six to one!"

There were no answers.

"Five to one!" There were givers at that. Purvis booked them in a tattered notebook.

Montgomery began to feel happy. He lay back with his legs outstretched, his back against the corner-post, and one gloved hand upon each rope. What a delicious minute it was between each round. If he could only keep out of harm's way, he must surely wear this man out before the end of twenty rounds. He was so slow that all his strength went for nothing.

"You're fightin' a winnin' fight—a winnin' fight," Ted Barton whispered in his ear. "Go canny; tak' no chances; you have him proper."

But the Master was crafty. He had fought so many battles with his maimed limb that he knew how to make the best of it. Warily and slowly he manœuvred round Montgomery, stepping forward and yet again forward until he had imperceptibly backed him into his corner. The student suddenly saw a flash of triumph upon the grim face, and a gleam in the dull, malignant eyes. The Master was upon him. He sprang aside and was on the ropes. The Master smashed in one of his terrible upper-cuts, and Montgomery half broke it with his guard. The student sprang the other way and was against the other converging rope. He was trapped in the angle. The Master sent in another, with a hoggish grunt which spoke of the energy behind it. Montgomery ducked, but got a jab from the left upon the mark. He closed with his man. "Break away! Break away!" cried the referee. Montgomery disengaged, and got a swinging blow on the ear as he did so. It had been a damaging round for him, and the Croxley people were shouting their delight.

"Gentlemen, I will *not* have this noise!" Stapleton roared. "I have been accustomed to preside at a well-conducted club, and not at a bear-garden." This little man, with the tilted hat and the bulging forehead, dominated the whole assembly. He was like a headmaster among his boys. He glared round him, and nobody cared to meet his eye.

Anastasia had kissed the Master when he resumed his seat. "Good lass. D't again!" cried the laughing crowd, and the angry Master shook his glove at her, as she flapped her towel in front of him. Montgomery was weary and a little sore, but not depressed. He had learned something. He would not again be tempted into danger.

For three rounds the honours were fairly equal. The student's hitting was the quicker, the Master's the harder. Profiting by his lesson, Montgomery kept himself in the open, and refused to be herded into a corner. Sometimes the Master succeeded in rushing him to the side-ropes, but the younger man slipped away, or closed and then disengaged. The monotonous "Break away! Break away!" of the referee broke in upon the quick, low patter of rubber-soled shoes, the dull thud of the blows, and the sharp, hissing breath of two tired men.

The ninth round found both of them in fairly good condition. Montgomery's head was still singing from the blow that he had in the corner, and one of his thumbs pained him acutely and seemed to be dislocated. The Master showed no sign of a touch, but his breathing was the more laboured, and a long line of ticks upon the referee's paper showed that the student had a good show of points. But one of this iron-man's blows was worth three of his, and he knew that without the gloves he could not have stood for three rounds against him. All the amateur work that he had done was the merest tapping and flapping

when compared to those frightful blows, from arms toughened by the shovel and the crowbar.

It was the tenth round, and the fight was half over. The betting now was only three to one, for the Wilson champion had held his own much better than had been expected. But those who knew the ringcraft as well as the staying power of the old prize-fighter knew that the odds were still a long way in his favour.

"Have a care of him!" whispered Barton, as he sent his man up to the scratch. "Have a care! He'll play thee a trick, if he can."

But Montgomery saw, or imagined he saw, that his antagonist was tiring. He looked jaded and listless, and his hands drooped a little from their position. His own youth and condition were beginning to tell. He sprang in and brought off a fine left-handed lead. The Master's return lacked his usual fire. Again Montgomery led, and again he got home. Then he tried his right upon the mark, and the Master guarded it downwards.

"Too low! Too low! A foul! A foul!" yelled a thousand voices.

The referee rolled his sardonic eyes slowly round. "Seems to me this buildin' is chock-full of referees," said he.

The people laughed and applauded, but their favour was as immaterial to him as their anger.

"No applause, please! This is not a theatre!" he yelled.

Montgomery was very pleased with himself. His adversary was evidently in a bad way. He was piling on his points and establishing a lead. He might as well make hay while the sun shone. The Master was looking all abroad. Montgomery popped one upon his blue jowl and got away without a return. And then the Master suddenly dropped both his hands and began rubbing his thigh. Ah! that was it, was it? He had muscular cramp.

"Go in! Go in!" cried Teddy Barton.

Montgomery sprang wildly forward, and the next instant was lying half senseless, with his neck nearly broken, in the middle of the ring.

The whole round had been a long conspiracy to tempt him within reach of one of those terrible right-hand upper-cuts for which the Master was famous. For this the listless, weary bearing, for this the cramp in the thigh. When Montgomery had sprang in so hotly he had exposed himself to such a blow as neither flesh nor blood could stand. Whizzing up from below with a rigid arm, which put the Master's eleven stone into its force, it struck him under the jaw: he whirled half round, and fell a helpless and half-paralysed mass. A vague groan and murmur, inarticulate, too excited for words, rose from the great audience. With open mouths and staring eyes they gazed at the twitching and quivering figure.

"Stand back! Stand right back!" shrieked the referee, for the Master was standing over his man ready to give him the *coup-de-grâce* as he rose.

"Stand back, Craggs, this instant!" Stapleton repeated.

The Master sank his hands sulkily and walked backwards to the rope with his ferocious eyes fixed upon his fallen antagonist. The timekeeper called the seconds. If ten of them passed before Montgomery rose to his feet, the fight was ended. Ted Barton wrung his hands and danced about in an agony in his corner.

As if in a dream—a terrible nightmare—the student could hear the voice of the timekeeper—three—four—five—he got up on his hand—six—seven—he was on his knee, sick, swimming, faint, but resolute to rise. Eight—he was up, and the Master was on him like a tiger, lashing savagely at him with both hands. Folk held their breath as they watched those terrible blows, and anticipated the pitiful end—so much more pitiful where a game but helpless man refuses to accept defeat.

Strangely automatic is the human brain. Without volition, without effort, there shot into the memory of this bewildered, staggering, half-stupefied man the one thing which could have saved him—that blind eye of which the Master's son had spoken. It was the same as the other to look at, but Montgomery remembered that he had said that it was the left. He reeled to the left side, half felled by a drive which lit upon his shoulder. The Master pivoted round upon his leg and was at him in an instant.

"Yark him, lad! yark him!" screamed the woman.

"Hold your tongue!" said the referee.

Montgomery slipped to the left again and yet again;

but the Master was too quick and clever for him. He struck round and got him full on the face as he tried once more to break away. Montgomery's knees weakened under him, and he fell with a groan on the floor. This time he knew that he was done. With bitter agony he realized, as he groped blindly with his hands, that he could not possibly raise himself. Far away and muffled he heard, amid the murmurs of the multitude, the fateful voice of the timekeeper counting off the seconds.

"One—two—three—four—five—six——"

"Time!" said the referee.

Then the pent-up passion of the great assembly broke loose. Croxley gave a deep groan of disappointment. The Wilsons were on their feet, yelling with delight. There was still a chance for them. In four more seconds their man would have been solemnly counted out. But now he had a minute in which to recover. The referee looked round with relaxed features and laughing eyes. He loved this rough game, this school for humble heroes, and it was pleasant to him to intervene as a *Deus ex machina* at so dramatic a moment. His chair and his hat were both tilted at an extreme angle; he and the timekeeper smiled at each other. Ted Barton and the other second had rushed out and thrust an arm each under Montgomery's knee, the other behind his loins, and so carried him back to his stool. His head lolled upon his shoulder, but a douche of cold water sent a shiver through him, and he started and looked round him.

"He's a' right!" cried the people round. "He's a rare brave lad. Good lad! Good lad!" Barton poured some brandy into his mouth. The mists cleared a little, and he realized where he was and what he had to do. But he was still very weak, and he hardly dared to hope that he could survive another round.

"Seconds out of the ring!" cried the referee. "Time!"

The Croxley Master sprang eagerly off his stool.

"Keep clear of him! Go easy for a bit," said Barton; and Montgomery walked out to meet his man once more.

He had had two lessons—the one when the Master got him into his corner, the other when he had been lured into mixing it up with so powerful an antagonist. Now he would be wary. Another blow would finish him; he could afford to run no risks. The Master was determined to follow up his advantage, and rushed at him, slogging furiously right and left. But Montgomery was too young and active to be caught. He was strong upon his legs once more, and his wits had all come back to him. It was a gallant sight—the line-of-battleship trying to pour its overwhelming broadside into the frigate, and the frigate manœuvring always so as to avoid it. The Master tried all his ring-craft. He coaxed the student up by pretended inactivity; he rushed at him with furious rushes towards the ropes. For three rounds he exhausted every wile in trying to get at him. Montgomery during all this time was conscious that his strength was minute by

minute coming back to him. The spinal jar from an upper-cut is overwhelming, but evanescent. He was losing all sense of it beyond a great stiffness of the neck. For the first round after his downfall he had been content to be entirely on the defensive, only too happy if he could stall off the furious attacks of the Master. In the second he occasionally ventured upon a light counter. In the third he was smacking back merrily where he saw an opening. His people yelled their approval of him at the end of every round. Even the iron-workers cheered him with that fine unselfishness which true sport engenders. To most of them, unspiritual and unimaginative, the sight of this clean-limbed young Apollo, rising above disaster and holding on while consciousness was in him to his appointed task, was the greatest thing their experience had ever known.

But the Master's naturally morose temper became more and more murderous at this postponement of his hopes. Three rounds ago the battle had been in his hands; now it was all to do over again. Round by round his man was recovering his strength. By the fifteenth he was strong again in wind and limb. But the vigilant Anastasia saw something which encouraged her.

"That bash in t' ribs is telling on him, Jock," she whispered. "Why else should he be gulping t' brandy? Go in, lad, and thou hast him yet."

Montgomery had suddenly taken the flask from Barton's hand, and had a deep pull at the contents.

Then, with his face a little flushed, and with a curious look of purpose, which made the referee stare hard at him, in his eyes, he rose for the sixteenth round.

"Game as a pairtridgel" cried the publican, as he looked at the hard-set face.

"Mix it oop, lad; mix it oop!" cried the iron-men to their Master.

And then a hum of exultation ran through their ranks as they realized that their tougher, harder, stronger man held the vantage, after all.

Neither of the men showed much sign of punishment. Small gloves crush and numb, but they do not cut. One of the Master's eyes was even more flush with his cheek than Nature had made it. Montgomery had two or three livid marks upon his body, and his face was haggard, save for that pink spot which the brandy had brought into either cheek. He rocked a little as he stood opposite his man, and his hands drooped as if he felt the gloves to be an unutterable weight. It was evident that he was spent and desperately weary. If he received one other blow it must surely be fatal to him. If he brought one home, what power could there be behind it, and what chance was there of its harming the colossus in front of him? It was the crisis of the fight. This round must decide it. "Mix it oop, lad; mix it oop!" the iron-men whooped. Even the savage eyes of the referee were unable to restrain the excited crowd.

Now, at last, the chance had come for Montgomery. He had learned a lesson from his more experienced

ival. Why should he not play his own game upon him? He was spent, but not nearly so spent as he pretended. That brandy was to call up his reserves, to let him have strength to take full advantage of the opening when it came. It was thrilling and tingling through his veins, at the very moment when he was surging and rocking like a beaten man. He acted his part admirably. The Master felt that there was an easy task before him, and rushed in with ungainly activity to finish it once for all. He slap-banged away left and right, boring Montgomery up against the ropes, swinging in his ferocious blows with those animal grunts which told of the vicious energy behind them.

But Montgomery was too cool to fall a victim to any of those murderous upper-cuts. He kept out of harm's way with a rigid guard, an active foot, and a head which was swift to duck. And yet he contrived to present the same appearance of a man who is hopelessly done. The Master, weary from his own shower of blows, and fearing nothing from so weak a man, dropped his hand for an instant, and at that instant Montgomery's right came home.

It was a magnificent blow, straight, clean, crisp, with the force of the loins and the back behind it. And it landed where he had meant it to—upon the exact point of that blue-grained chin. Flesh and blood could not stand such a blow in such a place. Neither valour nor hardihood can save the man to whom it comes. The Master fell backwards, flat, prostrate, striking the ground with so simultaneous a clap that

it was like a shutter falling from a wall. A yell which no referee could control broke from the crowded benches as the giant went down. He lay upon his back, his knees a little drawn up, his huge chest panting. He twitched and shook, but could not move. His feet pawed convulsively once or twice. It was no use. He was done. "Eight—nine—ten!" said the timekeeper, and the roar of a thousand voices, with a deafening clap like the broadside of a ship, told that the Master of Croxley was the Master no more.

Montgomery stood half dazed, looking down at the huge, prostrate figure. He could hardly realize that it was indeed all over. He saw the referee motion towards him with his hand. He heard his name bel-
lowed in triumph from every side. And then he was aware of someone rushing towards him; he caught a glimpse of a flushed face and an aureole of flying red hair, a gloveless fist struck him between the eyes, and he was on his back in the ring beside his antagonist, while a dozen of his supporters were endeavouring to secure the frantic Anastasia. He heard the angry shouting of the referee, the screaming of the furious woman, and the cries of the mob. Then something seemed to break like an over-stretched banjo-string, and he sank into the deep, deep, mist-girt abyss of unconsciousness.

The dressing was like a thing in a dream, and so was a vision of the Master with the grin of a bulldog upon his face, and his three teeth amiably protruded. He shook Montgomery heartily by the hand.

"I would have been rare pleased to shake thee by the throttle, lad, a short while syne," said he. "But I bear no ill-feelin' again' thee. It was a rare poonch that brought me down—I have not had a better since my second fight wi' Billy Edwards' in '89. Happen thou might think o' goin' further wi' this business. If thou dost, and want a trainer, there's not much inside t' ropes as I don't know. Or happen thou might like to try it wi' me old style and bare knuckles. Thou hast but to write to t' ironworks to find me."

But Montgomery disclaimed any such ambition. A canvas bag with his share—one hundred and ninety sovereigns—was handed to him, of which he gave ten to the Master, who also received some share of the gate-money. Then, with young Wilson escorting him on one side, Purvis on the other, and Fawcett carrying his bag behind, he went in triumph to his carriage, and drove amid a long roar, which lined the highway like a hedge for the seven miles, back to his starting-point.

"It's the greatest thing I ever saw in my life. By George, it's ripping!" cried Wilson, who had been left in a kind of ecstasy by the events of the day. "There's a chap over Barnsley way who fancies himself a bit. Let us spring you on him, and let him see what he can make of you. We'll put up a purse—won't we, Purvis? You shall never want a backer."

"At his weight," said the publican, "I'm behind him, I am, for twenty rounds, and no age, country, or colour barred."

"So am I!" cried Fawcett; "middle-weight

champion of the world, that's what he is—here, in the same carriage with us.”

But Montgomery was not to be beguiled.

“No; I have my own work to do now.”

“And what may that be?”

“I'll use this money to get my medical degree.”

“Well, we've plenty of doctors, but you're the only man in the Riding that could smack the Croxley Master off his legs. However, I suppose you know your own business best. When you're a doctor, you'd become down into these parts, and you'll always find a job waiting for you at the Wilson Coal-pits.”

Montgomery had returned by devious ways to the surgery. The horses were smoking at the door, and the doctor was just back from his long journey. Several patients had called in his absence, and he was in the worst of tempers.

“I suppose I should be glad that you have come back at all, Mr. Montgomery!” he snarled. “When next you elect to take a holiday, I trust it will not be at so busy a time.”

“I am sorry, sir, that you should have been inconvenienced.”

“Yes, sir, I have been exceedingly inconvenienced. Here, for the first time, he looked hard at the assistant. “Good heavens, Mr. Montgomery, what have you been doing with your left eye?”

It was where Anastasia had lodged her protest.

Montgomery laughed. “It is nothing, sir,” said he.

“And you have a livid mark under your jaw. It

indeed, terrible that my representative should be going about in so disreputable a condition. How did you receive these injuries? ”

“ Well, sir, as you know, there was a little glove-fight to-day over at Croxley.”

“ And you got mixed up with that brutal crowd? ”

“ I *was* rather mixed up with them.”

“ And who assaulted you? ”

“ One of the fighters.”

“ Which of them? ”

“ The Master of Croxley.”

“ Good heavens! Perhaps you interfered with him? ”

“ Well, to tell the truth, I did a little.”

“ Mr. Montgomery, in such a practice as mine, intimately associated as it is with the highest and most progressive elements of our small community, it is impossible——”

But just then the tentative bray of a cornet-player searching for his keynote jarred upon their ears, and an instant later the Wilson Colliery brass band was in full cry with, “ See the Conquering Hero Comes”, outside the surgery window. There was a banner waving, and a shouting crowd of miners.

“ What is it? What does it mean? ” cried the angry doctor.

“ It means, sir, that I have, in the only way which was open to me, earned the money which is necessary for my education. It is my duty, Doctor Oldacre, to warn you that I am about to return to the University, and that you should lose no time in appointing my successor.”

By
BERNARD DARWIN



THE WOODEN PUTTER

It was not for want of clubs that Mr. Polwinkle's handicap obstinately refused to fall below sixteen. His rack full of them extended round three sides of the smoking-room. In addition, there was an enormous box resembling a sarcophagus on the floor, and in one corner was a large loose heap of clubs. To get one out of the heap without sending the others crashing to the ground was as delicate and difficult as a game of spillikins, and the housemaid had bestowed on it many an early morning malediction.

The rack along one side of the wall was clearly of a peculiarly sacred character. The clips holding the clubs were of plush, and behind each clip there was pasted on the wall an inscription in Mr. Polwinkle's meticulously neat handwriting. There was a driver stated to have belonged to the great James Braid; a mashie of J. H. Taylor's; a spoon of Herd's.

Nor were illustrious amateurs unrepresented. Indeed, these were the greatest treasures in Mr. Polwinkle's collection, because they had been harder to come by. The mid-iron had quite a long pedigree, passing through a number of obscure and intermediate

stages, and ending in a blaze of glory with the awful name of Mr. John Ball, who was alleged once to have played a shot with it at the request of an admirer. A putting cleek with a rather long, old-fashioned head and a battered grip bore the scrupulous inscription: "Attributed to the late Mr. F. G. Tait."

Mr. Polwinkle always sighed when he came to that cleek. Its authenticity was, he had to admit, doubtful. There were so many Freddie Tait putters. Half the club-houses in England seemed to possess one; they could hardly all be genuine. His Hilton he no longer even pretended to believe in.

"I bought that," he would say, "when I was a very young collector, and I'm afraid I was imposed upon." But, at any rate, there was no doubt about his latest acquisition, before which he now paused lovingly. Here was the whole story, written down by a man, who knew another man, who knew the people with whom Mr. Wethered had been staying. Mr. Wethered had overslept himself, packed up his clubs in a hurry, and left his iron behind; so he had borrowed this one, and had graciously remarked that it was a very nice one.

It must not be supposed that Mr. Polwinkle was ever so daring as to play with these sacred clubs. He contented himself with gazing and, on rare occasions, with a reverent waggle.

Mr. Polwinkle, as I have said, was not a good player. He was aware of not playing consistently up to his sixteen handicap. If he did not always insist

on his rights of giving two strokes to his friend Buffery, he might, he was conscious, have suffered the indignity of being beaten level by an eighteen handicap player; and with all this nonsense about scratch scores and a raising of the standard, he saw before him the horrid certainty of soon being eighteen himself.

This evening he was feeling particularly depressed. It had been a bad day. Buffery had won by five and four without using either of his strokes, and had hinted pretty strongly that he did not propose to accept them any more. Confound the tactless creature!

Mr. Polwinkle tried to soothe himself by looking at his treasures. Ah! if only he could just for one day be endued with the slash and power of those who had played with them. If only something of their virtue could have passed into their clubs, what a splendid heritage! Such a miracle might even be possible if he had but faith enough. Coué-suggestion—better and better and better—how wonderful it would be!

Suddenly he felt a glow of new hope and inspiration. Greatly daring, he took from the rack the driver "with which" as the inscription lyrically proclaimed, "James Braid won the championship at Prestwick in 1908, with the unexampled score of 291; eight strokes better than the second score, and playing such golf as had never been seen before on that classic course".

He took one glance to see that his feet were in the right place—long practice enabled him to judge to

an inch the position in which the furniture was safe—and then he swung.

Gracious goodness! What had happened? Back went the club, instinct with speed and power, and he felt a violent and unaccustomed wrenching round of his hips. Down it came more swiftly than ever, his knees seemed to crumple under him with the vehemence of the blow, and swish went the clubhead, right out and round in a glorious finish. A shower of glass fell all over him and he was left in darkness.

Never had he experienced anything before in the least like that tremendous sensation; the electric light had always been perfectly safe. With trembling fingers he struck a match and groped his way, crunching glass as he walked, to the two candles on the chimney-piece. Once more he swung the club up; then paused at the top of the swing, as he had done so many hundreds of times before, and gazed at himself in the glass. Could it really be?

He rushed to the bookshelf, tore down *Advanced Golf*, turned to the appropriate page, and again allowed the club to swing and wrench him in its grip. There could be no doubt about it. Allowing for differences of form and feature he was Braid to the very life—the poise, the turn of the body, the very knuckles—all were the same.

The miracle had happened with one club. Would it happen with all? Out came the Taylor mashie from the rack. As he picked it up his head seemed to shake formidably, his wrists felt suddenly as if they were

made of whipcord, his boots seemed to swell and clutch the ground; another second—crash!—down came the club and out came a divot of carpet, hurtling across the room, while Mr. Polwinkle's eyes were fixed in a burning and furious gaze on the gaping rent that was left.

Then it really was all right. If he could swing the club like the great masters, he could surely hit the ball like them, and the next time he played Buffery, by Jove! it would not be only two strokes he could give him.

He was in the middle of being Mr. Wethered when the door opened and Buffery walked in. Mr. Polwinkle had got his feet so wide apart in his admirable impersonation that he could not move; for a perceptible moment he could only straddle and stare.

"They told me you were in, old chap," began Buffery, "so I just walked in. What on earth are you at? I always said that light would get it in the neck some day!" Buffery's heartiness, though well meant, was sometimes hard to bear. "However," he went on, while Mr. Polwinkle was still speechless, "what I came about was this. You remember you said you'd come down to Sandwich with me some day. Well, I suddenly find I can get off for three days. Will you come?"

Mr. Polwinkle hesitated a moment. He did not feel very kindly disposed towards Buffery. He should like to practise his new styles a little before crushing him; but still, Sandwich! And he had never seen it.

"All right," he said; "I'll come!"

"Topping!" cried Buffery. "We'll have some great matches, and I'm going to beat you level—you see if I don't!"

Mr. Polwinkle gathered himself together for an effort.

"I will give you," he said slowly and distinctly, "a stroke a hole, and I'll play you for"—and he hesitated on the brink of something still wilder—"five pounds!"

Buffery guffawed with laughter. He had never heard Mr. Polwinkle make so good a joke before.

The next evening saw them safely arrived and installed at the Bell.

The journey, though slow, had been for Mr. Polwinkle full of romance. When he changed at Minster he snuffed the air and thought that already he could smell the sea. His mind was a jumble of old championships and of the wondrous shots he was going to play on the morrow. At dinner he managed to make Buffery understand that he really did mean to give him a stroke a hole. And Buffery, when at last convinced that it was not a joke, merely observed that a fiver would be a pleasant little help towards his expenses.

After dinner he felt too restless and excited to sit still, and leaving Buffery to play bridge, wandered stealthily into the hall to see if his precious clubs were safe. He felt a momentary shiver of horror when

he found someone examining his bag. Had news of the match been spread abroad? Was this a backer of Buffery's tampering with his clubs?

No; he appeared a harmless, friendly creature, and apologised very nicely. He was merely, he said, amusing himself by looking at the different sets of clubs.

"You've got some jolly good ones," he went on, making Mr. Polwinkle blush with pleasure. "And look here, your mashie and mine might be twins—they're as like as two peas!" And he produced his own from a neighbouring bag. They certainly were exactly alike; both bore the signature of their great maker; in weight and balance they were identical.

"Taylor used to play with mine himself!" said Mr. Polwinkle, in a voice of pride and awe. "And this is Herd's spoon, and here's a putter of——"

"I expect he'd have played just as well with mine," cut in the stranger—Jones was the unobtrusive name on his bag—with regrettable flippancy. "Anyhow, they're both good clubs. Wish I could play like Taylor with mine. Well, I'm going to turn in early—good-night!"

Mr. Polwinkle, a little sad that Jones did not want to hear all about his collection, fastened up his bag, and thought he would go to bed, too. He lay awake for some time, for the cocks crow as persistently by night in the town of Sandwich as the larks sing by day upon the links; moreover, he was a little excited. Still, he slept at last, and dreamed of mashie shots

with so much back-spin on them that they pitched on Prince's and came back into the hole on St. George's.

"Well," said Buffery, as they stood next morning on the first tee at St. George's, "it's your honour—you're the giver of strokes", he added, in a rather bitter tone.

Mr. Polwinkle took out the Braid driver with as nonchalant an air as he could muster. He could not help feeling horribly frightened, but no doubt the club would help him through. He gave one waggle with that menacing little shake of the club that Walton Heath knows so well, and then the ball sped away an incredible distance. It was far over the "kitchen", that grassy hollow that has caught and stopped so many hundreds of balls; but it had a decided hook on it, and ran on and on till it finished in the rough on the left.

One of the caddies gave a prolonged whistle of surprise and admiration. Who was this new, unknown, and infinitely mild-looking champion who made the club hum through the air like a hornet? Buffery, too, was palpably taken aback.

"I say, old chap," he remarked, "you seem to have been putting a lot on to your drive. Was that what you had up your sleeve?"

However, he managed to hit a very decent shot himself into the kitchen, and then, narrowly escaping that trappy little bunker on the right with his second, lay in a good strategic position in front of the big cross-bunker.

Meanwhile, Mr. Polwinkle was following up his own vast tee shot in an agitated state of mind. Of course, he reflected, Braid *can* hook. It was, he had read, the one human weakness to which the great man was occasionally prone, but it seemed hard that this should be the occasion. The ball lay very heavy in the rough, and worse than all he had only his own niblick, with which he was singularly ineffective. He had once had the chance of acquiring a genuine Ray, but niblicks were clumsy, ugly things and did not interest him. Why had he been such a fool?

His first effort was a lamentable top, his second only just got the ball out of the rough, with a gaping wound in its vitals. Still, there was a hope if Herd's spoon would behave itself as it should, and he addressed himself to the shot with a desperate composure.

Heavens, what was the matter with him? Was he never going to hit the ball? He felt himself growing dizzy with all those waggles, a fierce little glance at the hole between each of them. There could be no possible doubt that this spoon was a genuine Herd. Just as he felt that he must scream if it went on much longer, up went the club, and away went the ball—the most divine spoon shot ever seen—cut up into the wind to perfection; the ball pitched over the bunker, gave a dying kick or two, and lay within a yard of the hole.

Even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer; "Good shot!" growled Buffery grudgingly.

That was four—he would be down in five. The enemy with his stroke had three for the hole, but the

big cross bunker yawned between him and the green. Drat the man, he had not topped it. He had pitched well over, and his approach putt lay so dead that Mr. Polwinkle, though in no generous mood, had to give it him. One down.

At the second hole at Sandwich, as all the world knows, there is a long and joyous carry from the tee. A really fine shot will soar over the bunker and the hill-top beyond, and the ball will lie in a little green valley, to be pitched home on to the green; but the short driver must make a wide tack to the right and will have a more difficult second.

Buffery, inspired by his previous win, despite his opponent's mighty drive, decided to "go for it". And plump went his ball into the bunker.

The Braid driver was on its best behaviour this time—a magnificent shot, straight as an arrow and far over the hill.

"H'm!" said Buffery, looking discontentedly at the face of his driver. "Is that any new patent kind of ball you are playing with?"

"No," returned Mr. Polwinkle frigidly. "You can weigh it after the round if you like." And they walked on in stony silence.

Buffery had to hack his ball out backwards, and his third was away to the right of the green.

"Just a little flick with the mashie, sir," said Mr. Polwinkle's caddie, putting the club in his hand.

He took the mashie, but somehow he did not feel

comfortable. He shifted and wriggled, and finally his eye was high in the heavens long before the ball was struck. When he looked down to earth again he found the ball had only moved about three yards forward—a total and ignominious fluff. He tried again; another fluff moved it forward but a few painful inches; again, and a third precisely similar shot deposited it in the bunker in front of his nose. Then he went berserk with his niblick, irretrievably ruined a second new ball, and gave up the hole.

“Let me look at that mashie!” he said to his caddie as he walked on towards the next tee. And, after microscopically examining its head, “I see what it is!” he exclaimed, in frantic accents. “It’s that fellow—what’s his d—d name, who was looking at my clubs last night—he’s mixed them up—he’s got my mashie and I’ve got his! Do you know Mr. Jones by sight?” And he turned to his caddie.

“Yes, sir; I knows him. And that’s a funny thing if you’ve got his mashie. I was just thinking to myself that them shots of yours was just like what he plays. ‘Joneses,’ his friends call them. He’ll play like a blooming pro. for a bit, and then fluff two or three——”

“Where is he now? Is he in front of us?” Mr. Polwinkle interrupted. Yes; Jones had started some time ago.

“Then run as hard as you can and tell him I’m playing an important match and insist on having my mashie back. Quick now, run!”—as the caddie was

going to say something. "I'll carry the clubs." And the caddie disappeared reluctantly in the sandhills.

"Bad luck, old man!" said Buffery, his complacency restored by that wonderfully soothing medicine of two holes up, "But I'll tell you where to go. Now this is the Sahara. The hole's over there," pointing to the left; "but it's too long a carry for you and me—we must go round by the right."

"Which line would Braid take?" asked Mr. Polwinkle. "Straight at the flag, would he? Then I shall go straight for the flag!"

"Please yourself!" answered Buffery, with a shrug, and played away to the right—a mild little shot and rather sliced, but still clear of the sand. Mr. Polwinkle followed with another superb tee shot. Far over all that tumultuous mass of rolling sandhills the ball flew, and was last seen swooping down on to the green. Buffery's second was weak and caught in the hollow; his third was half topped and ran well past; his fourth put him within a yard or so of the hole.

The best he could do would be a five, and all the while there stood Mr. Polwinkle, calm, silent, and majestic, six yards from the flag in one. He had only to get down in two putts to win the hole; but he had not yet had a putt, and which putter was he to use—the Tait or the Harry Vardon? He decided on the Tait. A moment later he wished he had not, for his putt was the feeblest imaginable, and the ball finished a good five feet short. Still he persevered, and again was pitifully short.

"By Jove, that's a let-off, old chap!" said the tactless one, and popped his own ball into the hole.

"I'll give you that one!" he added magnanimously, and picked up Mr. Polwinkle's ball, which was reposing some three inches from the hole.

"I was always afraid it was a forgery!" murmured Mr. Polwinkle, mechanically accepting the ball. "Freddie Tait was never short with his putts—the books all say that!"

Buffery looked at him wonderingly, opened his mouth as if to make some jocular comment, then thought better of it and led the way to the tee.

Much the same thing happened at the fourth. Two magnificent shots by Braid and Herd respectively, right up to the edge of the little plateau, where it stands defiantly with the black railings in the background; a series of four scrambles and scuffles by Buffery, which just escaped perdition. Two for the hole again, and this time the Vardon putter was tried. The first putt was beautiful. How sweetly and smoothly and with what a free wrist it was taken back! The ball, perfectly struck, seemed in, then it just slipped past and lay two feet away.

"Ah!" he said to himself, with a long sigh of satisfaction, "at any rate this is genuine!"

Alas! it was but too true; for when it came to the short putt, Mr. Polwinkle's wrist seemed suddenly to become locked, there was a quick little jerk of the club and—yes, somehow or other the ball had missed the hole. Buffery was down in his two putts

again, and it was another half, this time in five to six.

"I ought to have been all square by now if I could have putted as well as an old lady with a broomstick!" said poor Mr. Polwinkle.

"Well, I like that!" answered the other truculently. "I ought to have been four up if I could have played a decent second either time!" And this time there was a lasting silence.

Mr. Polwinkle felt depressed and miserable. Still his heart rose a little when he contemplated the bunker that had to be carried from the tee at the fifth, and beyond it the formidable Maiden with its black terraces. And, sure enough, Buffery got into the bunker in three—not into the black terraces, because, sad to say, men do not now play over the Maiden's crown, but only over the lower spurs—touching, as it were, but the skirts of her sandy garment. Still, he was in the bunker, and Mr. Polwinkle had only a pitch to reach the green. Here it was that he wanted a good caddie to put an iron in his hand—to put anything there but the mashie that had played him false. But Mr. Polwinkle was flustered.

"After all," he thought, "a mashie is a mashie, even if it is not a genuine Taylor, and if I keep my eye on the ball——"

Clean off the socket this time the ball flew away towards cover-point, and buried itself in a clump of bents. Why did he not "deem it unplayable"? I do

not know. But since Mr. Horace Hutchinson once ruined a medal round and probably lost the St. George's Vase at the Maiden by forgetting that he could tee and lose two, Mr. Polwinkle may be forgiven. When his ball ultimately emerged from the bents he had played five; they holed out in nine apiece, for Buffery had also had his adventures and the stroke settled in. Three down.

Worse was to come, for at the sixth Buffery had the impudence to get a three—a perfect tee shot and two putts; no-one could give a stroke to that. At the seventh Mr. Polwinkle, club in hand, walked forward with elaborate care to survey the ground, walked backwards, his eye still fixed on the green—and heeled his ball smartly backwards like a Rugby forward. For a moment he was bewildered. Then he looked at his club. His Wethered iron! Of course. It was the tragedy of the Open Championship at St. Andrews over again!

At Hades his Vardon putter again misbehaved at short range, and Mr. Polwinkle looked at it reproachfully.

“I always thought it belonged to a bad period!” he groaned, remembering some of those tragic years in which the greatest of all golfers could do everything but hole a yard putt. He would use the Vardon no more. But, then, what on earth was he to putt with? He tried the pseudo-Tait again at the ninth, and by dint of taking only three putts got a half; but still he was six down.

There was one ray of comfort. There was his caddie waiting for him, having no doubt run the villain Jones to earth, and under his arm protruded the handle of a club.

"Well," he shouted, "have you got it?"

"No, sir," the caddie answered—and embarrassment and amusement seemed to struggle together in his voice. "Mr. Jones says he's playing an important match, too, and as you didn't send back his mashie he's going on with yours. Said they were just the same, he did, and he wouldn't know any difference between yours and his own."

"Then what's that club you've got there?" demanded Mr. Polwinkle.

"The gentleman lent you this to make up, so he said," the caddie replied, producing a wooden putter. "I was particularly to tell you it belonged to someone who used it in a great match, and blessed if I haven't forgotten who it was."

Mr. Polwinkle took the putter in his hand and could not disguise from himself that it had no apparent merits of any description. The shaft was warped, not bent in an upward curve as a well-bred wooden putter should be, and decidedly springy; no name whatever was discernible on the head. Still, he badly needed a putter, and if it had been used by an eminent hand——

"Think, man, think!" he exclaimed vehemently. "You must remember!" But the caddie racked his brain in vain. And then——

"Really," said Buffery, "we can't wait all day

while your caddie tries to remember ancient history. This is the match we're thinking about, and I'm six up!" And he drove off—a bad hook into the thick and benty rough on the left.

And now, thank goodness, I have reached the end of Mr. Polwinkle's misfortunes. The tide is about to turn. At the second shot Mr. Wethered's iron, I regret to have to say, made another error. It just pulled the ball into that horrid trappy bunker that waits voraciously at the left-hand corner of the plateau green—and that after Buffery had played three and was not on the green.

Mr. Polwinkle's temper had been badly shaken once or twice, and now it gave out entirely.

"Give me any dashed club you like!" he snarled, seized the first that came handy, and plunged into the bunker.

"Good sort of club to get out of a bunker with!" he said to himself, finding that he had a mid-iron in his hand, and then—out came the ball, as if it was the easiest thing in the world, and sat down within four yards of the hole.

How had it happened? Why, it was Mr. Ball's iron—and did not the hero of Hoylake habitually pitch out of bunkers with a straight-faced iron? Of course he did—and played his ordinary pitches with it as well. What a thing it was to know history! Here at once was a magic niblick and a substitute for the mashie rolled into one. And just then his caddie smacked himself loudly and suddenly on the thigh.

"I've remembered it, sir. It was Tommy something—young Tommy, I think."

"Young Tommy Morris?" gasped Mr. Polwinkle breathlessly.

"Ah!" said the caddie. "Morris—that was it!"

"Give me the wooden putter!" said Mr. Polwinkle—and the ball rattled against the back of the tin. That was a four against Buffery's six. Down to five with eight to play.

It is a well-known fact that when golf is faultless there is next to nothing to write about it. The golfing reporter may say that So-and-so pushed his drive and pulled his second; but the real fact is that the great So-and-so was on the course with his tee shot, on the green with his second, and down in two putts—and kept on doing it. That is all the reporter need have said, but he says more because he has his living to earn. So have I; but, nevertheless, I shall not describe Mr. Polwinkle's homecoming at full length. More brilliantly faultless golf never was seen. Braid drove magnificently, Mr. Ball did all the pitching to perfection and even Mr. Wethered behaved impeccably. As for the wooden putter, most of the putts went in, and even those that did not gave Buffery a cold shiver down his spine. What could poor eighteen-handicap Buffery do against it? He must need wilt under such an onslaught. If he did a respectable five, Mr. Polwinkle did a "birdie" three. If he did a long hole in six, as he did at the Suez Canal, that wooden putter holed one for a four.

Here, for those who know the course, are the figures of Mr. Polwinkle's first eight holes coming home, 4, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 2, 4. That was enough. Buffery was a crushed man; hole after hole slipped away, and when he had reached the seventeenth green in eight, there was nothing for it but to give up the match. Six up at the turn and beaten by 2 and 1!

As Mr. Polwinkle walked triumphantly into the club-house he met Jones, and almost fell on his neck.

"My dear fellow," he cried, "I can't thank you enough for that putter. I holed everything. Never saw anything like it! I suppose," he went on, with a sudden desperate boldness, "there's no chance of your selling it me, is there?"

"Oh, no, I won't sell it!" began Jones.

"I knew it was too much to ask!" said Mr. Polwinkle dejectedly.

"But I'll give it you with pleasure!"

"Oh, but I couldn't let you do that! Give me it for nothing—a putter that belonged to young Tommy—the greatest putter that ever——"

"Well, you see," said Jones, "I only told the caddie to tell you that because I thought it might put you on your putting. And, by George, it seems to have done it, too. Wonderful what a little confidence will do. You're perfectly welcome to the putter—I bought it in a toyshop for eighteen-pence!"

Mr. Polwinkle fell swooning to the floor.

By
LORD DUNSANY



HOW JEMBU PLAYED FOR
CAMBRIDGE

THE next time that Murcote brought me again to his Club we arrived a little late. Lunch was over, and nine or ten of them were gathered before that fireplace they have; and that talk of theirs had commenced, the charm of which was that there was no way of predicting upon what topics it would touch. It all depended upon who was there, and who was leading the talk, and what his mood was; and of course on all manner of irrelevant things besides, such as whisky, and the day's news or rumour.

But to-day they had evidently all been talking of cricket, and the reason of that was clearer than men usually seem to think such reasons are. I seemed to see it almost the moment that I sat down; and nobody told it me, but the air seemed heavy with it. The reason that they talked about cricket was that there was a group there that day that were out of sympathy with Mr. Jorkens; bored perhaps by his long reminiscences, irritated by his lies, or disgusted by the untidy mess that intemperance made of his tie. Whatever it was it was clear enough that they were talking

vigorously of cricket because they felt sure that that topic if well adhered to must keep the old fellow away from the trackless lands and the jungles, and that, if he must talk of Africa, it could only be of some tidy trim well-ordered civilised part of it that he could get from the subject of cricket. They felt so sure of this.

They had evidently been talking of cricket for some time, and were resolute to keep on it, when shortly after I sat down amongst them one turned to Jorkens himself and said, "Are you going to watch the match at Lord's?"

"No, no," said Jorkens sadly. "I never watch cricket now."

"But you used to a good deal, didn't you?" said another, determined not to let Jorkens get away from cricket.

"Oh, yes," said Jorkens, "once; right up to that time when Cambridge beat Surrey by one run." He sighed heavily and continued: "You remember that?"

"Yes," said someone. "But tell us about it."

They thought they were on safe ground there. And so they started Jorkens upon a story, thinking they had him far from the cactus jungles. But that old wanderer was not kept so easily in English fields, his imagination to-day or his memory or whatever you call it, any more than his body had been in the old days, of which he so often told.

"It's a long story," said Jorkens. "You remember Jembu?"

"Of course," said the cricketers.

"You remember his winning hit," said Jorkens.

"Yes, a two, wasn't it?" said someone.

"Yes," said Jorkens, "it was. And you remember how he got it?"

That was too much for the cricketers. None quite remembered. And then Murcote spoke. "Didn't he put it through the slips with his knee?" he said.

"Exactly," said Jorkens. "Exactly. That's what he did. Put it through the slips with his knee. And only a leg-bye. He never hit it. Only a leg-bye." And his voice dropped into mumbles.

"What did you say?" said one of the ruthless cricketers, determined to keep him to cricket.

"Only a leg-bye," said Jorkens. "He never hit it."

"Well, he won the match all right," said one, "with that couple of runs. It didn't matter how he got them."

"Didn't it!" said Jorkens. "Didn't it!"

And in the silence that followed the solemnity of his emphasis he looked from face to face. Nobody had any answer. Jorkens had got them.

"I'll tell you whether it mattered or not, that couple of leg-byes," said Jorkens then. And in the silence he told this story:

"I knew Jembu at Cambridge. He was younger than me, of course, but I used to go back to Cambridge often to see those towers and the flat fen country, and so I came to know Jembu. He was no cricketer. No, no, Jembu was no cricketer. He dressed as white men dress and spoke perfect English, but

they could not teach him cricket. He used to play golf and things like that. And sometimes in the evening he would go right away by himself and sit down on the grass and sing. He was like that all his first year. And then one day they seem to have got him to play a bit, and then he got interested, probably because he saw the admiration they had for his marvellous fielding. But as for batting, as for making a run, well, his average was less than one in something like ten innings.

"And then he came by the ambition to play for Cambridge. You never know with these natives what on earth they will set their hearts on. And I suppose that if he had not fulfilled his ambition he would have died or committed murder or something. But, as you know, he played for Cambridge at the end of his second year."

"Yes," said someone.

"Yes, but do you know how?" said Jorkens.

"Why, by being the best bat of his time I suppose," said Murcote.

"He never made more than fifty," said Jorkens, with a certain sly look in his eye, as it seemed to me.

"No," said Murcote, "but within one or two of it, whenever he went to the wickets, for something like two years."

"One doesn't want more than that," said another.

"No," said Jorkens. "But he did the day that they played Surrey. Well, I'll tell you how he came to play for Cambridge."

"Yes, do," they said.

"When Jembu decided that he must play for Cambridge he practised at the nets for a fortnight, then broke his bat over his knee and disappeared."

"Where did he go to?" said someone a little incredulously.

"He went home," said Jorkens.

"Home?" they said.

"I was on the same boat with him," said Jorkens, drawing himself up at the sound of doubt in their voices.

"You were going to tell us how Jembu played for Cambridge," said one called Terbut, a lawyer, who seemed as much out of sympathy with Jorkens and his ways as any of them.

"Wait a moment," said Jorkens. "I told you he could not bat. Now, when one of these African natives wants to do something that he can't, you know what he always does? He goes to a witch doctor. And when Jembu made up his mind to play for Cambridge he put the whole force of his personality into that one object, every atom of will he had inherited from all his ferocious ancestors. He gave up reading divinity, and everything, and just practised at the nets as I told you, all day long for a fortnight."

"Not an easy thing to break a bat over his knee," said Terbut.

"His strength was enormous," said Jorkens. "I was more interested in cricket in those days than in anything else. I visited Jembu in his rooms just at

that time. Into the room where we sat he had put the last touches of tidiness: I never saw anything so neat: all his divinity books put away trim in their shelves—he must have had over a hundred of them—and everything in the room with that air about it that a dog would recognise as foreboding a going away.

“ ‘ I am going home,’ he said.

“ ‘ What, giving up cricket?’ I asked.

“ ‘ No,’ he answered and his gaze looked beyond me as though concerned with some far-off contentment. ‘ No, but I must make runs.’

“ ‘ You want practice,’ I said.

“ ‘ I want prayer,’ he answered.

“ ‘ But you can pray here,’ I said.

He shook his head.

“ ‘ No, no,’ he answered with that far-away look again.

“ Well, I only cared for cricket. Nothing else interested me then. And I wanted to see how he would do it. I suppose I shouldn’t trouble about it nowadays. But the memory of his perfect fielding, and his keenness for the one thing I cared about, and his tremendous ambition, as it seemed to me then, to play cricket for Cambridge, made the whole thing a quest that I must see the end of.

“ ‘ Where will you pray?’ I said.

“ ‘ There’s a man that is very good at all that sort of thing,’ he answered.

“ ‘ Where does he live?’ I said.

“ ‘ Home.’

"Well, it turned out he had taken a cabin on one of the Union Castle line. And I decided to go with him. I booked my passage on the same boat; and, when we got into the Mediterranean, deck cricket began, and Jembu was always bowled in the first few balls even at that. I am no cricketer, I worshipped the great players all the more for that; I don't pretend to have been a cricketer; but I stayed at the wickets longer than Jembu every time, all through the Mediterranean till we got to the Red Sea, and it became too hot to play cricket, or even to think of it for more than a minute or two on end. The equator felt cool and refreshing after that. And then one day we came into Killindini. Jembu had two ponies to meet us there and twenty or thirty men."

"Wired to them I suppose," said Terbut.

"No," said Jorkens. "He had wired to some sort of a missionary who was in touch with Jembu's people. Jembu, you know, was a pretty important chieftain, and when anyone got word to his people that Jembu wanted them, they had to come. They had tents for us, and mattresses, and they put them on their heads and carried them away through Africa, while we rode. It was before the days of the railway, and it was a long trek, and uphill all the way. We rose eight thousand feet in two hundred miles. We went on day after day into the interior of Africa: you know the country?"

"We have heard you tell of it," said someone.

"Yes, yes," said Jorkens, cutting out, as I thought,

a good deal of local colour that he had intended to give us. "And one day Kenya came in sight like a head between two great shoulders; and then Jembu turned northwards. Yes, he turned northwards as far as I could make out; and travelled much more quickly; and we came to nine thousand feet, and forests of cedar. And every evening Jembu and I used to play stump cricket, and I always bowled him out in an over or two; and then the sun would set and we lit our fires."

"Was it cold?" said Terbut.

"To keep off lions," said Jorkens.

"You bowled out Jembu?" said another incredulously, urged to speech by an honest doubt, or else to turn Jorkens away from one of his interminable lion-stories.

"A hundred times," said Jorkens, "if I have done it once."

"Jembu!" some of us muttered almost involuntarily, for the fame of his batting lived on, as indeed it does still.

"Wait till I tell you," said Jorkens. "In a day or two we began to leave the high ground: bamboos took the place of cedars; trees I knew nothing of took the place of bamboos; and we came in sight of hideous forests of cactus; when we burned their trunks in our camp-fires, mobs of great insects rushed out of the shrivelling bark. And one day we came in sight of hills that Jembu knew, with a forest lying dark in the

valleys and folds of them, and Jembu's own honey-pots tied to the upper branches.

"These honey-pots were the principal source, I fancy, of Jembu's wealth: narrow wooden pots about three feet long, in which the wild bees lived, and guarded by men that you never see, waiting with bows and arrows. It was the harvest of these in a hundred square miles of forest that sent Jembu to Cambridge to study divinity, and learn our ways and our language. Of course he had cattle, too, and plenty of ivory came his way, and raw gold now and then; and, in a quiet way, I should fancy, a good many slaves.

"Jembu's face lighted up when he saw his honey-pots, and the forest that was his home, dark under those hills that were all flashing in sunlight. But no thought of his home or his honey-pots made him forget for a single instant his ambition to play for Cambridge, and that night at the edge of the forest he was handling a bat still, and I was still bowling him out.

"Next day we came to the huts of Jembu's people. Queer people. I should have liked to have shown you a photograph of them. I had a small camera with me. But whenever I put it up they all ran away.

"We came to their odd reed huts.

"Undergrowth had been cleared and the earth stamped hard by bare feet, but they did not ever seem to have thinned the trees, and their huts were in and out among the great trunks. My tent was set

up a little way from the huts, while Jembu went to his people. Men came and offered me milk and fruit and chickens, and went away. And in the evening Jembu came to me.

“ ‘ I am going to pray now,’ he said.

“ I thought he meant there and then, and rose to leave the tent to him.

“ ‘ No,’ he said, ‘ one can’t pray by oneself.’

“ Then I gathered that by ‘ pray ’ he meant some kind of worship, and that the man he had told me of in his rooms at Cambridge would be somewhere near now. I was so keen on cricket in those days that anything affecting it always seemed to me of paramount importance, and I said ‘ May I come, too? ’

“ Jembu merely beckoned with his hand and walked on.

“ We went through the dark of the forest for some few minutes, and saw in the shade a great building standing alone. A sort of cathedral of thatch. Inside, a great space seemed bare. The walls near to the ground were of reed and ivory: above, it was all a darkness of rafters and thatch. The long thin reeds were vertical, and every foot or so a great tusk of an elephant stood upright in the wall. Nuggets of gold here and there were fastened against the tusks by thin strands of copper. Presently I could make out that a thin line of brushwood was laid in a wide circle on the floor. Inside it Jembu sat down on the hard mud. And I went far away from it and sat in a corner, though not too near to the reeds, because, if anything

would make a good home for a cobra, they would. And Jembu said never a word; and I waited.

"Then a man stepped through the reeds in the wall that Jembu was facing, dressed in a girdle of feathers hanging down from his hips, wing feathers they seemed to be, as out of a crane. He went to some sort of iron pot that stood on the floor, that I had not noticed before, and lifted the lid and took fire from it, and lit the thin line of brushwood that ran round Jembu. Then he began to dance. He must have been twelve or fifteen feet from Jembu when he began to dance, and he danced round him in circles, or leapt is a better word, for it was too fierce for a dance. He took no notice of me. After he had been dancing some time I saw that his circles were narrowing; and presently he came to the line of brushwood at a point that the fire had not reached, and leapt through it and danced on round Jembu. Jembu sat perfectly still, with his eyes fixed. The weirdest shadows were galloping now round the walls from the waving flames of the brushwood; and any man such as us must have been sick and giddy from the frightful pace of those now narrow circles that he was making round Jembu, but he leapt nimbly on. He was within a few feet of my friend now. What would he do, I was wondering, when he reached him? Still Jembu never stirred, either hand or eyelid. Stray leaves drifting up from the dancing savage's feet were already settling on Jembu. And all of a sudden the black dancer fainted.

"He lay on the ground before Jembu, his feet:

a yard from him, and one arm flung out away from him, so that that hand lay in the brushwood. The flames were near to the hand, but Jembu never stirred. They reached it and scorched it: Jembu never lifted a finger, and the heathen dancer neither moved nor flinched. I knew then that this swoon that he had gone into was a real swoon, whatever was happening. The flames died down round the hand, died down round the whole circle; till only a glow remained, and the shadow of Jembu was as still on the wall as a black bronze image of Buddha.

"I began to get up then, with the idea of doing something for the unconscious man, but Jembu caught the movement, slight as it was, although he was not looking at me; and, still without giving me a glance of his eye, waved me sharply away with a jerk of his left hand. So I left the man lying there, as silent as Jembu. And there I sat, while Jembu seemed not to be breathing, and the embers went out and the place seemed dimmer than ever for the light of the fire that was gone. And then the dancing man came to, and got up and bent over Jembu, and spoke to him, and turned; and all at once he was gone through the slit in the reeds by which he had entered the temple. Then Jembu turned his head, and I looked at him.

" 'He has promised,' he said.

" 'Who?' I asked.

" 'Mungo,' said Jembu.

" 'Was that Mungo?' I asked.

" 'He? No! Only his servant.'

“ ‘ Who is Mungo? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ We don’t know,’ said Jembu, with so much finality that I said no more of that.

“ ‘ But I asked what he had promised.

“ ‘ Fifty runs,’ replied Jembu.

“ ‘ In one innings? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Whenever I bat,’ said Jembu.

“ ‘ Whenever you bat! ’ I said. ‘ Why! That will get you into any eleven. Once or twice would attract notice, but a steady average of fifty, and always to be relied on—it mayn’t be spectacular, but you’d be the prop of any eleven.’

“ ‘ He seemed so sure of it that I was quite excited; I could not imagine a more valuable man to have in a team than one who could always do that, day after day, against any kind of bowling, on a good wicket or bad.

“ ‘ But I must never make more,’ said Jembu.

“ ‘ You’ll hardly want to,’ I said.

“ ‘ Not a run more,’ said Jembu, gazing straight at the wall.

“ ‘ What will happen if you do? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ You never know with Mungo,’ Jembu replied.

“ ‘ Don’t you? ’ I said.

“ ‘ No man knows that,’ said Jembu.

“ ‘ You’ll be able to play for Cambridge now,’ I said.

“ Jembu got up from the floor and we came away.

“ ‘ He spoke to his people that evening in the fire-light. Told them he was going back to Cambridge

again, told them what he was going to do there, I suppose; though what they made of it, or what they thought Cambridge was, Mungo only knows. But I saw from his face, and from theirs, that he made that higher civilisation, to which he was going back, very beautiful to them, a sort of landmark far far on ahead of them, to which I suppose they thought that they would one day come themselves. Fancy them playing cricket!

"Well, next day we turned round and started back again, hundreds of miles to the sea. The lions . . ."

"We've heard about them," said Terbut.

"Oh, well," said Jorkens.

But if they wouldn't hear his lion-stories they wanted to hear how Jembu played for Cambridge: it was the glamour of Jembu's name after all these years that was holding them. And soon he was back with his story of the long trek to the sea from somewhere North of a line between Kenya and the great lake.

He told us of birds that to me seemed quite incredible, birds with horny faces, and voices like organ-notes; and he told us of the cactus-forests again, speaking of cactus as though it could grow to the size of trees; and he told us of the falls of the Guaso Nyero, going down past a forest trailing grey beards of moss. There may be such falls as he told of above some such forest, but we thought more likely he had picked up tales of some queer foreign paradise, and was giving us them as geography, or else that he had smoked

opium or some such drug, and had dreamed of them. One never knew with Jorkens.

He told us how they came to the coast again; and apparently there are trees at Mombasa with enormous scarlet flowers that I have often seen made out of linen in the windows of drapers' shops, but according to him they are real.

Well, I will let him tell his own story.

"We had to wait in that oven" (he meant Mombasa) "for several days before we could get a ship, and when we got home the cricket season was over. It was an odd thing, but Jembu went to the nets at once, and began hitting about, as he had been doing in the Red Sea; and there was no doubt about it that he was an unmistakable batsman. And he always stopped before there was any possibility that he could by any means be supposed to have made fifty.

"I talked to him about Mungo now and then, but could get nothing much out of him: he became too serious for that, whenever one mentioned Mungo, and of the dancing man in the temple I got barely a word; indeed I never even knew his name. He read divinity still, but not with the old zest, so far as I could gather whenever I went to see him, and I think that his thoughts were far away with Mungo.

"And as soon as May came round he was back at cricket; and sure enough, as you know, he played for Cambridge. That was the year he played first; and you have only to look at old score books to see that he never made less than forty-six all that year.

He always got very shy when he neared fifty: he was too afraid of a four if he passed forty-six, and that was why he always approached it so gingerly, often stopping at forty-seven, though what he liked to do was to get to forty-six and then to hit a four and hear them applauding his fifty. For he was very fond of the good opinion of Englishmen, though the whole of our civilisation was really as nothing to him, compared with the fear of Mungo.

“ Well, his average was magnificent; considering how often he was not out, it must have been nearly eighty. And then next year was the year he played against Surrey. All through May and June he went on with his forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine and fifty; and Cambridge played Surrey early in July. I needn't tell you of that match; after Oxford *v.* Cambridge in 1870, and Eton *v.* Harrow in 1910, I suppose it's the best-remembered match in history. You remember how Cambridge had two runs to win and Jembu was in with Halket, the last wicket. Halket was their wicket-keeper and hardly able to deal with this situation; at least Jembu thought not, for he had obviously been getting the bowling all to himself for some time. But now he had made fifty. With the whole ground roaring applause at Jembu's fifty, and two runs still to win I laid a pretty large bet at two to one against Cambridge. Most of them knew his peculiarity of not passing fifty, but I was the only man on the ground that knew of his fear of Mungo. I alone had seen his face when the dancing man went

round him, I alone knew the terms. The bet was a good deal more than I could afford. A good deal more. Well, Jembu had the bowling; two to win; and the first ball he stopped very carefully; and then one came a little outside the off stump; and Jembu put his leg across the wicket and played the ball neatly through the slips with his knee. They ran two, and the game was over. Jembu's score, of course, stayed at fifty: no leg-byes could affect that, as anyone knows who has ever heard of cricket. How could anyone think otherwise? But that damned African spirit knew nothing of cricket. How should he know, if you come to think of it? Born probably ages ago in some tropical marsh, from which he had risen to hang over African villages, haunting old women and travellers lost in the forest, or blessing or cursing the crops with moods that changed with each wind, what should he know of the feelings or rules of a sportsman? Spirits like that keep their word as far as I've known: it was nothing but honest ignorance; and he had credited poor Jembu with fifty-two, though not a ball that had touched his bat that day had had any share in more than fifty runs.

“ And I've learned this of life, that you must abide by the mistakes of your superiors. Your own you may sometimes atone for, but with the mistakes of your superiors, so far as they affect you, there is nothing to do but to suffer for them.

“ There was no appeal for Jembu against Mungo's mistake. Who would have listened to him? Certainly

no-one here: certainly no-one in Africa. Jembu went back to see what Mungo had done, as soon as he found out the view that Mungo had taken. He found out that soon enough, by dropping back to his old score of one and nothing in three consecutive innings. The Cambridge captain assured him that that might happen to anybody, and that he mustn't think of giving up cricket. But Jembu knew. And he went back to his forest beyond Mount Kenya, to see what Mungo had done.

“And only a few years later I came on Jembu again, in a small hotel in Marseilles, where they give you excellent fish. They have them in a little tank of water, swimming about alive, and you choose your fish and they cook it. I went there only three or four years after that match against Surrey, being in Marseilles for a day; and a black waiter led me to the glass tank, and I looked up from the fishes, and it was Jembu. And we had a long talk, and he told me all that had happened because of those two leg-byes that had never been near his bat.

“It seems that a tribe that had never liked Jembu's people had broken into his forest and raided his honeypots. They had taken his ivory, and burnt his cathedral of thatch, and driven off all his slaves. I knew from speeches that he had made at Cambridge that Jembu in principle was entirely opposed to slavery; but it is altogether another matter to have one's slaves driven away, and not know where they have

gone to or whether they will be well cared for. It was that that broke his heart as much as the loss of his honey-pots; and they got his wives, too. His people were scattered, and all his cattle gone; there was nothing after that raid left for Jembu in Africa.

“He wandered down to the coast; he tried many jobs; but Mungo was always against him. He drifted to Port Said as a stowaway, to Marseilles as a sailor, and there deserted, and was many things more, before he rose to the position of waiter; and I question if Mungo had even done with him then. A certain fatalistic feeling he had, which he called resignation, seemed to bear him up and to comfort him. The word resignation, I think, came out of his books of divinity; but the feeling came from far back, out of old dark forests of Africa. And, wherever it came from, it cheered him awhile at his work in that inn of Marseilles, and caused him to leave gravy, just where it fell, on the starched shirt-front that he wore all day. He was not unhappy, but he looked for nothing better; after all, he had won that match for Cambridge against Surrey: I don’t see what more he could want; and many a man has less. But when I said good-bye to him I felt sure that Mungo would never alter his mind, either to understand, or to pardon, those two leg-byes.”

“Did you ask him,” said Terbut, “how Mungo knew that he got those two leg-byes?”

“No,” said Jorkens, “I didn’t ask him that.”

By
J. S. FLETCHER



WON ON THE LAST WICKET

For some reason, which it would have puzzled the oldest inhabitants of either village to explain, there had always been a curious rivalry between Cowdale and Marshfold.

Whether it was that Marshfold stood on top of the hill, and that Cowdale lay in the valley beneath, no one knew. But it was a fact that Marshfold people looked down on the Cowdalers in more senses than one, and that the Cowdale folk always spoke of the Marshfolders as being, literally and metaphorically, out of the world. If the inhabitants of these places ever chanced to meet, they immediately fell to disputing the merits of their respective communities; they would argue on their crops, their roses, their personal wealth, even on the religious and moral character of their nearest relations.

Their rivalry became a byword in the surrounding country, but it was well known that they never cared to put it to any practical test. No Cowdale man would take his flowers to any horticultural show at which a Marshfold man was exhibiting; no farmer of Marshfold would enter horse or sheep or pig against a

Cowdale farmer, for love, or money, or silver cup. And no news from London, or anywhere else, could have occasioned more surprise in the district than did the announcement that George Dixbury, the landlord of the Load of Hay at Marshfold, had signed articles with John Homan, landlord of the Grey Boar at Cowdale, for a cricket match between elevens representing their respective villages to be played on Cowdale Common on May Day, for stakes of twenty pounds a side.

That this great event ever came to be arranged was due to the casual meeting of old George Dixbury and John Homan at the Cross Keys in Highcaster, the county town, whither each had repaired in connection with the Assizes. They forgathered in the bar-parlour of the Cross Keys, and, although each cherished natural antipathies to the other, they drank together, and treated each other to cigars, and—as was certain to be the case—fell to arguing about their villages. And, after exhausting the usual topics, Homan turned a sly eye upon old George.

“I understand, Mr. Dixbury,” says he, “I understand that you’ve started cricket playing again at Marshfold? I’ve naught against it, but I understood that cricket didn’t thrive with you.”

“Cricket playing was suffered to lie fallow for a while, sir,” says old George, with dignity. “There was reasons, Mr. Homan—there was reasons, sir. But I’d a deal of good cricket furniture lying at the Load of Hay, sir, and as we have the best natural cricket pitch in the county on our common, we decided to revive

the glories of Marshfold cricket, in a manner of speaking."

"Did you?" says Homan, with a wink at the rest of the company. "Oh, indeed! I never heard as how Marshfold had any cricketing glories, nor yet any other glories. I should think you'll have your work set to make most Marshfolders understand which is bat and which is ball!"

"Never you mind, sir, never you mind!" says old George. "You can have your little joke, sir—we all know what Cowdalers is. But we could show you a few things, Mr. Homan. We're not afraid of aught that Cowdale could attempt in that line, sir."

"What? You don't mean to say that you'd presume to set yourselves against us?" says Homan. "Why, ours is a right eleven, and it's just been fitted out with new caps and belts; red and blue stripes, and looks uncommon fine."

"Never mind, sir, never mind!" says old George; "I played cricket before you was born, sir. We care naught for no Cowdalers up at Marshfold."

"Will you make a match of it?" says Homan, with another wink at the company. "But I know you won't, 'cause you daren't!"

Old George hit the table with a bang that made the glasses ring.

"Then you know wrong, sir!" he shouts. "Yes, sir, I will make a match. Eleven Marshfolders against eleven Cowdalers—now, then! And whenever and wherever you like, sir!"

"Ay; but will you back your lot?" asks Homan. "I'll lay you won't, 'cause you know they'll get beaten."

"I know nothing of the sort, sir," says old George, "and I *will* back our lot. Twenty pound, sir, money down; and Mr. Tinkle there shall hold the stakes. Now, sir!"

Homan seemed somewhat surprised at old George's readiness, but he was quick enough to accept the terms, and presently both men had their cheque-books out, and were discussing the conditions of the match with Tinkle, the landlord of the Cross Keys. There was really not much to discuss; the main thing was as to where the match was to be played. They agreed to toss for that, and Homan won, and promptly decided for Cowdale Common; and this was at once written down on Tinkle's notepaper. Then the date was fixed, and it was agreed to have a friendly supper after the match, at the Grey Boar. And all that was written down, too.

"And it's to be a strict condition that there's to be no paid men," says Homan. "No professionals whatsoever."

"I quite agree with that there," says old George. "No paid men. All Cowdalers and Marshfolders."

So that was written down, and they both put their names to Tinkle's memorandum, and then each wrote out a cheque for twenty pounds, and handed it to Tinkle. And after that they shook hands, and spent the rest of the evening in great friendship, each boast-

ing of what his men could do at cricket, and making facetious references to what he himself would do when he handled the stake money.

However, when old George Dixbury got home to Marshfold after his Assize business was over, and had time to think about matters in a calm fashion, he was not quite so well satisfied with himself as he had been when he made the bet. There had been next to no cricket played at Marshfold for two or three years, and, though practice had been going on since the middle of March, all the old players were rusty, and the young ones raw and inexperienced. They were all glad enough to hear of the match which Mr. Dixbury had arranged, but he had an uncomfortable feeling that what occasioned their joy was the prospect of a day off and a good supper—free of cost to themselves—at the end of it. And as the eventful day drew near old George grew more and more anxious, and he wished that he had deferred the date until July or August, and began to look upon his twenty pounds and the cost of the supper as already gone. And, naturally enough, it was at that moment that temptation came to him.

It came in the shape of a smart and ready-tongued gentleman from London, who arrived at the Load of Hay one fine April afternoon on a motor bicycle, and partook of a hearty meat-tea. Now, the Load of Hay faces Marshfold Common, and when the gentleman had eaten and drunk all that he could at that time, he lighted his pipe and went outside the inn, where he

found Mr. Dixbury sitting on a bench, and watching his eleven at practice. The stranger was much impressed with the landlord's evident anxiety and earnestness, and by the vigour of his frequent admonitions and counsels to the players, and he ventured at last to inquire if Mr. Dixbury was greatly interested.

"Ah, you may well ask that, sir!" replied old George. "I am, sir—I am interested considerably. To the extent of twenty pounds, sir. And the cost of a supper."

"A match, eh?" says the stranger. "And you're backing it?"

"A match, and I'm backing it, sir," answered old George. "Being what is termed patriotic, I'm backing it. But I'm afraid our lads are a little short of preparation, sir. I'm afraid they're not as strong as what their opponents is. I'm afraid so."

"Ah!" says the stranger calmly. "Just so. Well, why don't you get a little outside help? Professional, you know."

Mr. Dixbury sat up, and looked more dignified than ever. He removed his broad hat, and mopped his forehead.

"It's against the conditions, sir," he says. "No professional help—no outsiders. All Cowdalers and Marshfolders, sir."

"Oh, I see," says the stranger. "Just so. Still, I have known of similar conditions, and of how they have been evaded. Quite honestly evaded, you know."

"Have you indeed, sir," says old George politely.

"Have you indeed? Ah, no doubt, sir. There's a deal of shiftiness in this world, sir."

The stranger made no immediate reply to this, but smoked for a while in silence, watching the players with a very critical eye.

"Yes," he remarks eventually. "You're right, landlord. They're a poor lot, yours. But one really good man amongst them would stiffen them up wonderfully. Just one really good man!"

"And we haven't got him, sir!" says old George. "We haven't a real good, all-round man—we want one."

"Um!" says the stranger. "Ah! Must be all Marshfolders and Cowdalers, eh?"

"You're right, sir," says old George. "Them's the conditions, sir."

"And how," says the stranger, "how would you define a Marshfolder or a Cowdaler, now? Put it in—well, something like legal parlance. Now, supposing your nephew from—well, say Australia—came to stay with you under your hospitable roof for a while, wouldn't he be a Marshfolder for the time being? He would certainly be an inhabitant."

Old George rubbed his chin.

"I suppose he would, sir," he says, reflectively. "Yes, he certainly would be an inhabitant of Marshfold. But I haven't a nephew from Australia, sir."

"Well," says the stranger slowly, "I don't see why you shouldn't have one. Did you ever have a brother or sister that emigrated to any part of the world, Mr. Landlord?"

"My youngest sister, Mary Ann, went to New Zealand nigh on to five-and-thirty year since," replies old George, "and she ain't never come back, neither."

"Ah!" says the stranger. "That's excellent! I see some hope for you. Now, supposing your nephew, the son of Mary Ann, turned up, say, to-morrow, to see his dear uncle, you'd ask him to stay a while, wouldn't you? And supposing he turned out to be a very good cricketer, why, as he would be an inhabitant of Marshfold for the time being, he would be eligible to play, wouldn't he? Eh?"

Mr. Dixbury's mystified face began to clear, and his lips began to curl at the corners. He even chuckled a little, and nodded his head.

"I know a very good cricketer—good enough, at any rate," said the stranger, "who would come to-morrow, and stay with you over this match as your nephew from New Zealand for—well, a small consideration over and above your hospitality. I've only got to say the word to him when I reach town to-night, and he'll be with you to-morrow. And, by-the-by, what was Mary Ann's married name—it's best to be correct?"

Old George suddenly slapped his knee, and laughed loudly.

"Gad, it's a fine notion!" he exclaimed. "Come into my private parlour, sir, and we'll take a glass, and talk a bit more. Oh, it's a fine notion—a fine notion!"

The result of the further conversation in Mr. Dixbury's private parlour was that when the stranger rode

off, an hour later, he left the landlord of the Load of Hay in a state of high delight, and the cricketers when they came in from practice were astonished to find him in anything but the pessimistic mood in which he had shown himself for a full week. He treated them to drinks and to bread and cheese, and bade them all to practice harder than ever; moreover, he announced that it was his intention to present the top scorer in the coming match with something handsome, and they all went home saying that Mr. Dixbury was uncommon patriotic, and no mistake.

At noon next day the girl who carried out telegrams in Marshfold came to the Load of Hay with a message for Mr. Dixbury, upon reading which he startled his housekeeper, the barmaid, and everybody round about him with many loud exclamations. When he had come to the end of them, he announced that the telegram was to inform him that his nephew, the son of his sister Mary Ann, had just landed in England from New Zealand, and was coming down at once to pay his respects to his uncle, and he issued commands that the best bedroom should be prepared, and that a special supper should be cooked, and altogether let it be seen that he was very glad indeed to welcome his relation.

"And what might the young man's name be when he comes, Mr. Dixbury?" inquired the housekeeper. "Seeing as I never heard you mention him before, of course I don't know it."

"Perkins," replied old George. "Albert Edward

Perkins—his mother having wed a man of that name, ma'am."

"And I'm sure you'll be very pleased to see him, I expect," remarked the housekeeper. "Of course, he'll be a bit foreignerin' in his ways, but he'll no doubt soon make himself at home."

That Mr. Albert Edward Perkins came prepared to make himself at home, while he remained, was evident from the fact that the ancient omnibus which brought him from the railway, five miles off, brought also a quantity of luggage, including a well-worn leather cricket-bag.

He proved to bear a strong family resemblance to the stranger of the previous day, but Mr. Dixbury said nothing of this in public. What he did say, when he introduced him to his friends in the bar-parlour, was that this was his nephew Albert, from New Zealand, come to visit his uncle. After which old George drank his nephew's health.

"And I hope you'll stay as long as ever you can, Albert, my lad," says he. "This is your poor mother's native place, and I'm glad to see you in it."

"Thank you, Uncle George," says Albert. "It's very good of you. I'll certainly stay as long as I can, since you ask me."

"At any rate, Mr. Albert'll be able to see our grand cricket match," says one of the company. "Do you do anything that way yourself, sir, out in your country?"

Albert made answer that they did, and that he himself was very fond of cricket; and it being then about

time for the usual evening practice, everybody went out to the common, old George especially being keen on seeing what his newly acquired nephew could really do. And in about half an hour he was in a seventh heaven of delight, for Mr. Perkins, whoever he might be, was certainly a first-class cricketer, and able to play the whole of Cowdale and Marshfold put together.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Dixbury," said one of the Marshfold men of leading, later on in the bar-parlour: "this nephew of yours ought to play for us, sir. His mother was a Marshfolder, his uncle's a Marshfolder, and he's at present living in Marshfold. He must play, sir!"

Old George shook his head.

"Ah," says he mournfully, "I don't know what they'd say to it, Mr. Potter! They're that particular, is them Cowdalers, and 'specially John Homan: however, we'll see what we can do, sir."

Mr. Potter's opinion that Albert was a Marshfolder by every known law was shared in by all the other cricketers and their supporters, and one went so far as to suggest that legal advice should be taken on the matter. Old George, however, deprecated such a proceeding; the conditions of the match, he said, referred to inhabitants of Cowdale and Marshfold, and Albert was certainly an inhabitant of Marshfold.

"In fact, gentlemen," concluded old George, "for anything that John Homan and any Cowdaler knows, my nephew may be going to abide here for the

summer. An uncle that's never seen his nephew before isn't likely to let him go for a while, is he? And if residence doesn't make an inhabitant, I should like to know what does!"

There was general approval of these sentiments, and Albert remarked that it was quite refreshing to behold these manifestations of pleasure in the good old English game, and that he was glad to witness them.

"There's a friend of mine now in London," he continued—"came over in the same boat with me—that would give anything to see a real old-fashioned English cricket match in a real old English village. He'll envy me when he hears of all this."

"No need for him to do that, my lad," says old George. "Send him an invitation to come and see it. Ask him to come as my guest, and to stop as long as he likes. We'll show him a bit of old England."

Whether it was that Albert thought Mr. Dixbury might withdraw this invitation in the calmer hours of next morning, or that he was very desirous of seeing his friend, it is certain that he went to the post-office before breakfast next day and despatched a telegram bidding the friend to visit Marshfold; and by noon the friend arrived. He entered the Load of Hay a little before dinner-time. Albert was practising cricket on the common, and Mr. Dixbury was reading the newspaper in the bar. He looked up, and beheld the stranger who had tempted him.

"Hallo!" says old George. "Back, again, mister?"

"At your very kind invitation, Mr. Dixbury," says

the stranger. "I got Albert's wire at breakfast-time, so I came on at once. It's very good of you, and I hope you're satisfied with Albert."

Old George felt somewhat mystified, and he scratched his head.

"Oh—ah—I see!" he says. "Ay, just so. I say, mind you don't give the little arrangement away, you know."

"Albert and I never give anything away, sir," replied the stranger. "You trust to us, Mr. Dixbury. We know what's what."

"All right," says old George. "Pleased to see you. What'll you take before dinner? And—what's your name?"

"My name," replied the stranger, looking very solemn, "is Walker—Mr. Walker. I'll take a glass of dry sherry."

It soon became evident to old George Dixbury that, whoever Mr. Walker and Mr. Albert Edward Perkins might be, they were adepts in the art of making themselves thoroughly at home in another man's house. They had the two best bedrooms in the Load of Hay; they ate and drank of the best; they smoked old George's very best cigars; they treated admiring companies to drinks at old George's expense; they went fishing with old George's tackle. But every evening Albert sedulously kept the eleven cricketers up to their work, and he and Mr. Walker afterwards told tales of New Zealand in the bar-parlour to all who could be crammed into it; and old George said

to himself that when the match was safely over they would depart, and the Load of Hay would become as peaceful as usual. Like all old bachelors, he disliked excitement and innovation, and Mr. Walker and Mr. Perkins were, without doubt, lively characters, who kept things going rather more gaily than he liked.

"However, it's only for a week," thought old George. "A week'll soon pass, and then I'll see the end of 'em. The main thing is to win that match and my twenty pound."

When the morning of the match arrived, one half of the population of Marshfold descended the hillsides to Cowdale, in order to witness what seemed to them a much more important affair than the Derby or a contest between England and Australia. As for the cricketers, they went in Mr. Dixbury's big wagonette; Mr. Dixbury himself led the way in his pony-trap, accompanied by Mr. Walker. Albert, of course, was with the eleven, and old George gave him some sound advice before they set out.

"Do you make yourself as small and inconspicuous as ever you can, young man, before we start a-playing," says old George. "Don't go for to practice, or to show off, or aught of that. You be as dark a horse as ever you can until we've got a-going. Then you can do what you like with 'em."

"All right, Uncle George," says Albert meekly. "I won't attract any attention."

But when they had arrived at the tents which had been pitched on Cowdale Common, and Mr. John

Homan and the Cowdale captain came to greet their opponents, Mr. Homan was quick to notice Albert, and he promptly buttonholed Mr. Dixbury.

"Here!" he said indignantly. "This match is between Cowdale and Marshfold. That chap's not a Marshfolder!"

Old George snorted.

"Isn't he?" he said with a sneer. "That there is my own nephew, Mr. Homan, as is living with me, and like to do so for some time. He's a resident under my roof, sir, and has been before this match, and he will be after this match; and his mother, my sister, Mary Anne Dixbury as was, Perkins as is, was born in Marshfold. Not a Marshfolder, indeed!"

"Oh, well, of course, if he's living with you, that's different!" says Homan. "Only I hadn't seen him before, you know."

"You'll have plenty of opportunities of seeing him again, sir," says old George. "I tell you he's abiding with me for the present."

"You had him there, Mr. Dixbury," whispered Mr. Walker, as Homan went off. "Only let Albert get in, and you'll see their eyebrows go up. He's dead certain to make a hundred, is Albert."

There were more difficulties to be encountered, and the Marshfold captain having won the toss, Marshfold proceeded to bat. At his own request, Albert was to go in first wicket down, and while the first two batsmen proceeded to the wicket, he, Mr. Walker, and old George had a little talk.

"Begin quiet, my lad," says old George. "Don't frighten them, at first. Go gradual. There's plenty of time. Stop there and make runs gradual, as I say."

"All right—leave it to me," says Albert. "I'll play right through the innings; that'll be the best thing."

The first wicket produced ten runs; then the Marshfold carpenter was caught at slip. Albert proceeded leisurely to take his place, and Mr. Dixbury and Mr. Walker settled themselves to see some scientific batting.

"Now for it!" whispered Mr. Walker:

The next moment Mr. Dixbury collapsed in his chair, and Mr. Walker uttered a deep groan.

Albert had been bowled first ball!

"Who on earth could help it!" he growled, when he came back. "You never saw such a pitch in your born days. Why, it's actually got pebbles in it!"

From that moment everything went wrong with Marshfold. Batsman after batsman failed. Eventually all were out for fifty-three runs."

"Never mind," said Mr. Walker consolingly. "Wait till they go in. Albert'll bowl 'em all out like winking. They won't get twenty!"

Now, Albert was in reality an extremely good slow bowler, and against teams who knew him by reputation he would doubtless have done great execution. But the Cowdalers knew nothing of him; all that they knew or saw was a bowler sending up nice, slow balls that asked to be hit, and, being men of brawn and muscle, they went in and hit them hard and high and

often. And in the end—after about forty catches had been missed off Albert's bowling—they scored one hundred and twenty-five runs, and were consequently seventy-two runs in front on the first innings.

"That's nothing!" said the optimistic Mr. Walker. "Albert'll soon knock that off. I shouldn't wonder if Albert makes two hundred this second innings."

At his own request, Albert went in second wicket down this time. He privately informed Mr. Dixbury and Mr. Walker that they would see no more of him until tea-time, and he marched to the wicket with a determined air. He played two or three balls in a style that made some of the knowing spectators open their eyes; then a fast delivery jumped up, hit him on the wrist, and shot downwards on to the bails. Albert had failed to score for the second time!

Mr. Dixbury scarcely cared to see more of what went on after this catastrophe. He gathered, from what was being said round about him, that there was a procession of Marshfolders to and from the wickets, until a great deal of riotous enthusiasm announced that the match was over, and the Cowdalers had won by an innings and twenty-five runs.

"I'm sorry for you, Dixbury," said Mr. Homan, after receiving the stake money from the hands of Mr. Tinkle. "I knew you were a deal too sanguine. You're naught like as good as what we are. But you would have it, you know. However, to be neighbourly, I'll stand one half the supper—so there!"

When the Marshfolders returned home that night,

old George was in no mood for conversation with Messrs. Walker and Perkins on the subject of bad luck. He went to bed grumpily, and he rose in a bad temper. When he got down he found that his two guests had gone a-fishing, having made their usual hearty breakfasts, helped themselves to cigars, and filled their flasks. He glanced into their rooms, but saw no signs of preparation for their departure, whereupon he said some strong things to himself, and determined to put matters on a plain footing when they presented themselves for lunch.

"I expect you gentlemen'll want to be getting back to London this evening?" he said, when the three were alone. "You can have the trap to the station any time you like."

Mr. Perkins looked up with a stare of blank astonishment.

"What did you say, Uncle George?"

Mr. Dixbury swore.

"None o' that, now, young man!" he said. "We've had enough of play-acting. This is over. It's time you both went."

Mr. Perkins turned and looked at Mr. Walker.

"Bob," he said, "do you think my uncle's been taken ill? He doesn't seem to be himself. What——"

Old George banged the table at which he sat.

"You owdacious young rascal!" he vociferated. "How dare you! What do you mean by——"

Mr. Perkins closed the door of the parlour. He looked at Mr. Dixbury, and Mr. Dixbury's jaw dropped.

"Now, Mr. Dixbury," he said, "civil words, if you please. You've had me down here for your own purposes; you've introduced me publicly to your friends as your nephew; you've asked me in public to make myself at home, and to stop as long as I liked; you gave me permission in public to invite Mr. Walker to come and to stop as long as he liked. We shall keep you to your word. Think matters over, Mr. Dixbury."

Old George looked for a few minutes as if he were on the verge of apoplexy. He knew that he was being had, and that it was all his own fault. And suddenly he nodded his head.

"All right, my lads!" he said. "I see how it is—I must pay for my folly. Now then, how much will you take apiece to go? Name the figure."

Mr. Walker looked at Mr. Perkins; Mr. Perkins looked at the ceiling.

"I should think fifty pounds would only just compensate us, Albert?" said Mr. Walker.

"Only just, Bob," said Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Dixbury pulled out a five-pound note.

"That—or nothing!" he said.

Mr. Walker and Mr. Perkins shook their heads. Mr. Dixbury thereupon put on his hat, went out into his stable-yard, and a few moments later set off on his cob in the direction of the county town.

It was rather late in the evening when old George returned. There was a considerable company in the bar-parlour, and Mr. Walker and Mr. Perkins were

entertaining it in their usual fashion. Everybody hailed Mr. Dixbury with acclamation, but one glance at old George's face suddenly produced a profound silence. He strode to the hearthrug, and slowly drew out a sheet of paper, which he still more slowly unfolded.

"Gentlemen," said old George, looking solemnly at the Marshfolders, "I grieve to say that I have been deceived. It come into my head, gentlemen, that the young man there was not my nephew—never mind why. So I rode into Highcaster and saw my lawyer, and we sent what we call a cablegram to my sister in New Zealand, and prepaid a reply. Gentlemen, this is the reply:

" 'Never had a son. Have only two daughters.

MARY ANNE PERKINS.' "

Old George folded up the cablegram, put it in his pocket, and took off his spectacles. Then he turned to Mr. Walker and Albert, and pointed to the door.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you'll find a trap awaiting you outside. I wish you, on behalf of this company and myself, a very good-night!"

That evening, when everybody had gone, and old George smoked his last pipe and drank his last glass in peace and comfort, he chuckled to himself with great appreciation of his own cleverness.

"It was a very near thing with them two," he said, "a near thing, surely. But I won on the last wicket!"

By
STEPHEN GWYN



ST. BRIGID'S FLOOD

Four or five men were gathered together that evening in Forsyth's rooms, talking the usual talk of anglers when they congregate—flies, bait, good days, bad days, droughts, and floods. Forsyth was just expressing his preference for the extreme type of flood river—

“A regular mountain stream, you know—no lake on it, no feeders to speak of, but just the scourings of the hills. When it comes down there's no need to bother about waiting till it clears; you watch till it stops rising, and then fish at once; and some time or other when you're on the water you're pretty sure to hit the psychological moment.”

“Yes; but how long does it last?” put in Legge.

“Oh, an hour, two hours, six hours. But it's amusing, anyhow, to watch the water changing; it keeps up the interest—it's dramatic. I've seen a stream at Carrick get up five feet in the night, and go down to where it was in the forenoon.”

“If you come to that,” said Grayson, knocking his pipe on the mantelpiece, “I've seen a flood get up about five feet in five minutes.”

Grayson was a man none of us had seen before Forsyth had picked him up somewhere in Ireland, although what he said sounded pretty steep, none of us hooted.

"You mean a tide wave," Legge suggested lightly.

"Not in the least; just a flood out of the mountains like what Forsyth talks of. And if you like them dramatic, Forsyth, you'd have had your heart's content that time."

"Well," said Forsyth, "I know they get the devil's own floods in the West of Ireland; but I don't see how that could have happened in the natural order of things."

"I don't say that it did," answered Grayson; and anyhow, there were a good many people thought didn't. They thought exactly as you say, that it was the devil's own production, or, to be quite accurate, the work of St. Brigid, if you ever heard of her."

"No," said Forsyth; "but expound."

"Well," said Grayson, as he filled his pipe and settled down to narrative, "I'm not strong on saints; but St. Brigid has a lot of sacred places all through Ireland, and just up near Killala there's a well that she's supposed to have blessed. I was staying on the other side of the country at a place called Teelin, in the direction of Blacksod, where I had leave to fish the Bunlin River. It was a pretty wild place, I tell you, in those days; for the nearest rail was thirty miles off, and there weren't many of the amenities

of life at the inn. The fishing was no good either; for the place was a regular nest of poachers, and they had scooped out nearly every fish that was in the pools, so far as I could hear or see. I would have chucked it, only for a ruffian there that I made friends with—head and front of all the poachers of the district, by his own story; but he gillied for me in the daytime, and used to show me outlying streams where I got some sport. And he swore to me by all his gods that the weather was making up for a big flood, and then there would be great fishing in the Bunlin. Besides, he was very good company; so I stayed.

“I liked the people too, and I had got pretty friendly with them, though they didn’t much care for strangers. You see, the only strangers who ever came there were sporting tourists, and interfered with peaceable poaching; there wasn’t much to bring any one else. My word, but it was a desolate place! Great brown moors sloping down off mountains that had no particular shape, and running into great brown wastes of bog that stretched away out towards the sea. You hadn’t even the comfort of looking out to the ocean horizon, for there is a kind of low neck of land that runs between that country and the Atlantic. So you saw nothing on earth but brown shapeless bog and heather in all directions: just a little tillage along the river of course, but practically a bare wilderness of bog. And the valley of the river, so far as my fishing went, ran pretty straight east and west. It had no surprises or nooks or little prettinesses about

t, but was just as broad and bare as a valley can be. Only at the boundary of my water it took a sharp turn, and the river was jammed up tight in a winding cleft. Dan, my poacher friend, was always talking to me about the splendid pool there was just above here; and one day when we were doing no good at all, I left him my rod—he was always mad keen to be fishing himself—and walked up to look at it.

“He said I couldn’t miss it, and neither I could. When I got to the bridge—for I had struck back to the road—I could hear the rush of the little fall about fifty yards down, and I walked to it. The river came at an angle to the fall, and then it had a straight swift course of about a hundred yards in a deep confined channel. That day there was a lovely run at the head of it, but in any kind of flood the tail of the pool would be the chance. The place was a regular gorge. I walked down the right bank, which was just a handy height for fishing, but the other was a kind of cliff—you could see the track going up and down it like a sheep-run. At the end of the pool the sides of the gorge narrowed in again, so that I don’t suppose the water was thirty feet across; but just there on the far side the cliff drew back from the bank, and right in by the river was a cottage, a good bit better-looking than most of them. I would have thought it must have belonged to a keeper, only that on my side there was a watcher’s hut, built of scraws of turf, and presumably put there to observe the man on the spot. I remember thinking as I looked at it that I wouldn’t

mind being the man on the spot, if I had a rod on the water, for the site was charming. The cottage was regularly in the arms of the hill; and it faced down the valley about south-west, with its gable-end to the river, protected from the westerly draught up the valley by a little knoll. He was probably a 'well-doing' man, too, for just below this kind of gully the river curved to the right, and left a dozen acres or so of fairly level ground between it and the hills. All this was down in crops, cut up with stone walls, and there was only one other cottage near by—a much poorer one, too—so he probably held most of it. You see, I was taking stock of the place against the time when I should be a tenant.

"All the same, I should probably have forgotten most of these details; only, I fancy, one's memory is a sort of sensitive plate, which takes impressions, but they sink gradually in and fade into a blur unless something fixes them. Well, in this case I had the lines bitten in, pretty hard, just afterwards, in a way that stamped in my mind the position of that cottage, and the fact that the man had only one near neighbour. Just in the same way I am not likely to forget what otherwise would have faded away in a few days or weeks or months—the look of a fellow who came out of the cottage-door and stared at me across the river—a big, burly, dark-complexioned ruffian. I said to myself at once, 'That man's been in America'. You know the type, Forsyth—rather aggressive; 'I'm as good as you anyway'—that sort of air.

He was clean-shaven, too; that was another mark, for the men there all wear the beard, or else the old-fashioned scrap of whisker. Well, I went on down stream, and never gave him another thought; but the whole thing came back on me in a flash when I saw him again—lying quiet enough. That was when the first picture got bitten in and fixed.

“Just in the same way I shall always remember noticing an unusual feature in the landscape—a great massive outcrop of rock on the mountain-side straight above the cottage. It broke the featureless character of the hills, and there was a big patch of that orange lichen on it that caught the sun finely, and it was good to look at. But especially I noticed it because it set me thinking of a man called Bowen, a sort of professor who used to fish with me, and do a lot of geologising and botanising on off-days. He would have been bound to invent some theory to explain why that great lump stayed there sticking out, while all the hill-slopes about were being pared off smooth. And afterwards, when the event happened, I wrote to him to come and look at geology in the making, but he was in the Andes or somewhere. Only, it wouldn't have done for him to theorise in Teelin about what happened. Everybody in Teelin is very clear that if the rock was there, it was put there with a purpose.

“However, of course, the day I was up there I was thinking of nothing except that the pool was a splendid holding pool, and that a man might possibly kill fish in it even in low water, and that it probably

wasn't swept out with nets, and probably all mine were. At all events, Dan wasn't able to stir anything in them, no more than I could. But he said the weather was going to break, and he was right enough.

"It was the night before the 27th of August, when it broke with a lot of thunder and rain, and in the morning it was bright again; but the river was still rising, or anyhow not falling. I went out and fished for a bit, waiting for the psychological moment that Forsyth talks about; but Dan said there was more water to come and the fish wouldn't rise, though they were up from the sea, for I saw them moving. By about four o'clock it came on such a down-pour as I hardly ever was out in, and the day blackened and grew cold. You never saw anything so forsaken as that valley looked in the drift of water and smother of grey cloud. I went in, and while I was changing it broke into thunder again—the kind of thunder when you hear the sky torn across with a rip just over your head, and the lightning makes you blink. In that kind of storm human beings are just like animals, they always drift together; and I was a human being, so I went downstairs into the little shop. You know the kind of place—a clay floor between two counters: one counter is the bar, which is slopped over with stale porter; the other is the shop, where they sell damp matches, and envelopes gummed together, and tea and biscuits, and every necessary of life in its least attractive form; and the whole place reeks of porter and paraffin, and bacon, and several

other fragrances, and there is a window looking to the street, hermetically closed.

"The entire household was there, of course. Michael Flynn, the big chap who kept the hotel, was behind the bar. He wore a Newgate fringe, not very much bristlier than his eyebrows; his son was rum-maging for something in a dark corner, and the two girls were at the counter. Dan Keary was discoursing to Flynn across the bar with a couple of other worthies, and there was a woman sitting in the only chair, with her hands crossed on a parcel in her lap and her head down. She had evidently come in from the country for shopping and been weather-bound, and at the first look I thought she was in a bad fright. Anyhow, she was perfectly silent, but her lips were moving all the time. The two girls were giggling rather nervously.

"I was feeling rather divided in my mind about this flood, for it seemed as if my luck was to come at the expense of a lot of poor people. I expected to hear talk of nothing but the desperate damage to the oats—which, of course, were being laid as flat as a board. But, to my surprise, the only thing that the men were discussing was the effect upon a sort of pious picnic—the excursion to a 'station' at the Holy Well. 'There was three carloads of them went through here this morning about eight o'clock,' Michael Flynn said, 'and one girl with a bad cough on her this while back.' 'Faith,' said Dan, 'maybe she would have been better in her bed a day like this.' But Flynn was a very devout man, and he would not hear of this.

‘Well, now, I always heard it for a fact that there was never any one yet that went to that Well in a right mind, and did what was set down for to be done, but they were the better of going—saving always,’ he said, looking sharp at the woman, who was sitting mumbling to herself, ‘that they would ask something not fit to be granted.’

“I made a note, after my habit, to ask Dan for some explanation at a more convenient season. Just then, before any more could be said, we heard feet running down the road, the door was thrown open, and three men stepped in; the rain streaming off them made pools on the floor. The moment they spoke it was plain they belonged to another county, and I said to Dan, ‘Who are they?’ ‘Three Highlanders out of Donegal working on a conthrack,’ he told me. The last of them to enter was one of the most powerful human beings I ever looked at—very tall and rather gaunt, with a small head and a jaw like a pike’s; high cheekbones, forehead dented in, and small deep-set eyes. In spite of its ruggedness, the face was pleasant though, a queer mixture of good-humour and possible ferocity. They stood there in a group dripping in the doorway, a little shy; and behind them was the strange unnatural darkness of the evening, darker than it would have been most days at eight o’clock.

“‘God save us all, Neil,’ said Mick Flynn, speaking to the big man, ‘what kind of weather is that to be taking the road in? Is it from Mike O’Hanlon’s you’re coming?’

“ ‘ We thought it was quieter out of doors nor in,’ the man answered, with a twinkle in his eye. Then he caught sight of the woman sitting there, and turned away from Flynn. ‘ That’s a wild evening, Mrs. O’Hea,’ he said.

“ ‘ Obviously he didn’t want to talk; but there was a quick-eyed little fellow with him who was ready enough, and I saw Dan making up to him. ‘ Was there any quarrel between yez and the O’Hanlons?’

“ ‘ There was quarrel enough, then, if Neil M’Nelis was as brave as he’s big,’ the little man said, spitting viciously on the ground. ‘ But he’s that cautious like, he was afeard of killing Johnny O’Hanlon. Wasn’t that what he told us, William?’ he asked, turning to the other Donegal man.

“ ‘ The big fellow interrupted before he could get an answer. ‘ Bad luck to my tongue, then, if I told you what was not to be repeated, Ned M’Cormick. And if there was any trouble at all, wasn’t it because you were for ever threeping it to Johnny O’Hanlon that I could beat him with a hand tied behind me? An’ right well I know the kind of him, that if there was to be a fight, he’s not the one that would quet it in a hurry. An’ the drink was in him at the time he spoke.’

“ ‘ Well, now,’ said Michael Flynn in his judicial way, ‘ take my word for it, Neil, you done right. If it was in Mike O’Hanlon’s house you were, and he seen any kind of fight and his brother getting worsted, he’d not stay looking.’

“ ‘An’ if you beat the two of them,’ Dan Keary put in, ‘the O’Hanlons are a terrible strong clan, and they’d keep it up on you as long as you were in this country.’

“ ‘Well,’ said the big man, ‘if Johnny O’Hanlon was looking help, he needn’t go far to look it this day. There was half the O’Hanlons in the countryside in Mike’s house before we quet.’

“ ‘Ay, troth,’ said Ned M’Cormick, ‘and great diversion with them. There was Mike himself and the wife and four childer: that’s six; and there was Johnny O’Hanlon that came in middling cheerful from the station at Killala, and Black Peter Maloney with him, and his wife, that’s Michael’s sister: that’s nine now. An’ a couple more of them, ‘cousins, John O’Hanlon and his wife, that came running in out of the rain from off the road. That’s eleven.’

“ ‘Ay,’ said the other Donegal man, ‘and the fiddler with them that was making down here for Teelin, against the fair. An’ they had him up in the corner playin’ for them to dance, before Johnny began to strip and square up at Neil thonder.’

“ ‘Lord save us! such a houseful,’ said Mick Flynn; ‘twelve of them, and the three of you.’

“ ‘Faith, there was one more, or the ninth part of one,’ said Ned M’Cormick. ‘For Michael had the tailor in with him making a new coat agin the fair.’ Then he turned to the woman that was sitting there, and he had a malicious look in his little eyes. I had noticed she had stopped mumbling to herself, and was listening very intently. The little fellow had

noticed her too, but he made believe to be just catching sight of her.

“ ‘Och, and is that yourself, Mrs. O’Hea? Troth, then, Michael was talking of you: for he says to the tailor, ‘God help you if the coat’s not everything it ought to be. I’m for the fair at Teelin, and I’m bound to meet my sweetheart, Biddy O’Hea, and I’d like to be lookin’ my best.’ ”

“ She was an oldish woman, about fifty, I daresay, with a large, plain, round face; and her face itself didn’t change much. But the whole of her body shook and bent together as she sat, and her fingers crisped themselves in a spasm of rage; and she spoke, but the words came so fast and broken that I couldn’t hear what she was saying; only it was plain enough it wasn’t sweet to hear.

“ But M’Nelis took the little fellow by the shoulder and swung him round towards the door. ‘Bad luck to you for a spiteful wee divill’ said he. ‘Sure, Mrs. O’Hea, don’t mind his talk.’

“ But she got up and she gathered her shawl round herself and her parcel, with hands still shaking violently, and she began to speak, in the sing-song voice like a chant that Irish country people often fall into when they are in a passion.

“ ‘ ’Twas on St. Brigid’s day I put my curse on Mike O’Hanlon and all that belongs to him and draws breath in his house. May the breath choke in their throats! was the word I said, and I went to St. Brigid’s own water to say it. An’ to-day there’s a

station at the Well, and the whole of the O'Hanlons is gathered under one roof, and them dancing and singing. An' my curse is on them, an' them dancing and singing.'

"There wasn't one of us that said a word, and for my own part I was what they call in my country 'touched under'. There's a lot of sound physiological observation in that phrase, if you think of it. She went across to the door, and just as she had it open, she turned and said to M'Nelis, 'How many was in the O'Hanlons' house when you left it?' Then the door shut on her, and there was dead silence again, till one of the girls spoke with a frightened titter—

" 'Lord save us! that's an awful woman.'

" 'She's a bloody witch,' snapped out little M'Cormick, who had turned a sort of green.

" 'Mind you, how quick she was to reckon out the thirteen,' said Mick Flynn reflectively. 'Eleven O'Hanlons and the fiddler and the tailor. An' not one of us here or there noticed it.'

" 'Is it them notice it?' Dan struck in; 'sure Michael would not value it a snuff of a candle if he knew. What does he care about the like of that? Just the very same as he cares about Biddy O'Hea and her curses. Hasn't he heard her curse him like that a hundher times? And doesn't he see her stand at the door of her cottage cursing him, and him going out in the morning and coming in at night?'

" 'Well and well! Still and all, it's a wild evening, and I'm thinking, M'Nelis, maybe coming out of

that was the best thing ever you did. Come now, boys, a glass of whisky to put us in better heart.'

"The thunder by that time was growling away in the distance, the rain had slackened a bit, and I was mighty curious about all this. What was even more important, I didn't want my gillie to go on the burst. So after one glass I hauled the reluctant Dan out with me to look at the river, knowing that if I got him as far as the bridge I could speed him on to Mrs. Dan with some remnants of my half-crown in his pocket.

"The hotel stands where the main road up and down the valley is met at right angles by another making straight for the bridge, at which my fishing started. It was clearing a bit seawards, and the main rack of cloud came that way from the south-west. But up the valley, in among the hills, it looked wilder than ever; there was simply a black mass of vapour, twisted into queer shapes, apparently with a strong swirl from the east coming up against the general drift. Dan looked up at it.

" 'Begor! Biddy O'Hea will get a cooling for her anger before she's gone far. Wouldn't you think the sky was going to fall? 'Twill be down on top of her before she gets to Dohoomiss Bridge.'

" 'Is it up there she lives?' I said.

" 'You know the long pool you were looking at? Well, just a piece below that.'

"I thought for a moment he meant the cottage I had my eye on, opposite the watcher's hut, and said so.

“ ‘No, sir,’ said Dan; ‘that’s where her enemy lives—O’Hanlon.’ Then I began to understand.

“ ‘A big, black, clean-shaven fellow?’ I said.

“ ‘That’s the very man. You seen him up there? Well, you might notice Biddy’s cottage away back a bit in the hill. The way to it would be past O’Hanlon’s; but he keeps a wicked dog there, and Biddy has a track now made for herself over the mountain. Och, yes,’—for I asked him the obvious question—‘but what can the craythur do? She’s a widdy woman with a weak family of girls, an’ she got bad usage from Mick O’Hanlon first and last.’

“ ‘I asked him what they fell out about. ‘It was about some geese,’ said Dan, seeming to think that a final explanation. When I pressed for more details, it seemed that O’Hanlon said that she had stolen his and sold them, or she said that he had stolen hers—I forget which. Anyhow, Dan thought that the geese had been straying by the road and were just lifted by some of those fellows that go through driving big flocks of them to market. Then his cows got into her corn, and her cows got into his corn, and they accused one another of breaking down fences on purpose, and so it went on. I think maybe Dan was right, and there’s no call to look for other reasons why those people should hate one another. In a town nobody has time to have enemies. It’s only in the country that hatreds really ripen. You see a person going in and going out every day—he’s part of the landscape almost—and every time you see him, hate

stirs in your belly. And you see few other people—hardly any one else in a case like this. He fills the whole field of your vision. Then there are always these little incidents of geese, and gaps, and the like of that; and there's worse. His potatoes are growing near your potatoes, and his corn near your corn, and either you rejoice to see his doing worse, or you hate him like hell because his are doing better. That's the way you get a really fine well-rooted specimen of hate, that gets its nurture daily and grows like a tree. Love and hatred are both of them very much a matter of proximity, and your neighbour is twice as much your neighbour in the country.

“ Still, everywhere in Arcadia you have these sort of feuds, and they aren't explosive. They simply blacken a nature slowly, they don't result in act. But in this case there was another feud which might very well have passed over, only that it underlay this hatred begotten of proximity, and was kept warm. There was a history—commonplace enough, but dramatic in the ordinary way. I got it out of Dan by cross-questioning. This fellow Mike O'Hanlon was always what Dan called 'a boyo': he was a poacher and a stiller of whisky, of course, but Dan thought little of that. Only he broke the laws that these people respected as well as the laws they did not; he neglected his duty at confession, and he was pretty miscellaneous in his sweethearting. You know, of course, the peculiarity of Irish Catholics: they don't like sexual irregularity; and the wilder and more outlandish

a place is in Ireland, the fewer illegitimate births there are. It may be temperament, tradition, training—I don't know which. But anyhow the fact is certain. A man who runs loose is counted irreligious and disapproved of, and a woman who makes a slip might nearly as well hang herself at once. Well, in the course of his adventures Mike O'Hanlon came across Biddy O'Hea, who was then Biddy something else, and she was a woman of strong will and a violent temper, and she wanted to marry Mike. But she had no fortune, and anyhow very likely he had no notion of settling down. Perhaps she counted on that. But what she did was to marry a very old man who held this little farm up by the long pool. I couldn't get anything clear about dates; but there were children born, and after some time there was a fierce quarrel between Mike O'Hanlon and his father, and the priest was mixed up in it, and Mike went off to America. The pretext was some trouble about the seizure of a still, when the police were assaulted and one man badly hurt, and it was thought that Mike might be wanted. But Dan seemed to think that the reason why there was not the usual evidence forthcoming to establish Mike's *alibi* was that Mike's father and the priest wanted him out of the country.

“After a while old O'Hanlon died, and Mike came back to take up the farm, and, according to Dan, his morals were none the better. America is a questionable school, and there was a fellow out of a very lawless parish that I knew, who came back after a

couple of years, saying he never seen wickedness right till he seen it in the streets of New York. The contact with civilisation is not always a success for primitive natures. As Dan put it, there was no Christianity left in Mike O'Hanlon. Well, when he came back, Biddy O'Hea's old man was dead, and the priest himself tried to make up a marriage. But, as Dan said, 'Faith, Michael was a good match now, and the wee house down by the pool was on the way to Biddy's, and there was a girl in it with a fortune of a hundher and fifty pound, and Mike carried his courting no farther nor that.' So you may judge if the widow was kindly disposed to her neighbours when Mike settled in there. And I would say that in the slanging matches the geese and the gaps and the rest of it figured principally as a pretext.

"I don't know when the public quarrelling began or how long it went on; the gatherings when it happened would only come once or twice a year. Only it became recognised that whenever Mike O'Hanlon and Biddy O'Hea met in a fair, there would always be this sort of encounter. And, although O'Hanlon had the best of it for the rest of the year, and could always retort on her, and did, about her dirty little house and the weeds in her corn, and her starved-looking pony and so on, still, as Dan said, 'she had the tongue of him,' and public opinion was on her side. Well, I suppose the man wanted to silence her once and for all, and he didn't care how he did it, for, as I tell you, there was no Christianity in him. At

all events the crisis came when they met in Teelin at a market, and Dan was there and went up to listen.

“ ‘She joined on him at once,’ he said, ‘and maybe she didn’t give him a dressing down. An’ Mike stood there, with his back turned, letting on not to hear her, when all the while there was a ring of people round them, the same as there would be round a fight. “An’,” says she at last, “I wouldn’t put clean pigs to sleep with that dirty ugly lump of a woman you have, and them little red leprechauns of childer.” An’ at that Mike turned his head an’ his shoulder and says, “Well, there’s two fine black-haired girls in your own house anyway, and proud I am of them; for it was little your ould crooked O’Hea had to do with the making of them.” An’ then he turned on her and laughed in her face, wicked-like. “Och, Biddy,” says he, “don’t be too hard on your old sweetheart.” And when she heard that she turned the colour of that stone,’ said Dan, striking on the bridge parapet, ‘and you would have thought she was going to drop; but faith, not she. She up with her hands like that to the sky, and she prayed God the words might choke in the throat of him. But you heard her cursing him herself, and I needn’t be telling you the way of it. And sure it was no wonder she would be mad, for what person at all would put up with a thing like that cast up to them, let it be true or false—barring one that had no spirit at all in them?’

“ ‘She doesn’t want for spirit anyhow, if she faced a storm like this,’ I said, looking up the valley.

'They're getting it heavy up there. I suppose now she won't mind seeing her own crops go if his are washed out?'

"The whole head of the valley was lost in a black welter of cloud, as if a curtain was dropped between us and it. Dan took out his pipe and spat hard—

" 'She's a desperate woman that. What did she do but make the whole journey in her bare feet to the Holy Well, and she said a station backwards on him: ay, the whole of it, the five Paternosters and the five Hail Marys, and the prayer to Saint Brigid herself; every one of them backwards, beginning at the Amen, and praying that she might get the thing she desired, and that was the death by suffocating of Mike O'Hanlon and all his family.'

"I remember the way Dan mouthed out the long words as if he enjoyed them, and I remember trying to say something in chaff about O'Hanlon's being in no danger of choking from drought, when Dan interrupted me. We were leaning both of us, with our arms on the parapet of the bridge, looking up a long stretch they called the mill-pool, and watching the water automatically as it came tearing down—hardly discoloured at all, for there was no laboured land worth speaking of in the drainage. Suddenly Dan said to me in a puzzled way, 'The water's falling'.

"It sounded impossible; but sure enough at the ford, about fifty yards up, the break of a stone was showing. I looked up the valley: the sky was clearing, and for a minute I thought it had been only a local

storm, and the upper water got none of it. But the river was running down now like the sand in an hour-glass—‘Be damned to me if ever I see the like of that!’ said Dan. Then he gave a shout, ‘Oh, merciful Jesus, look there!’

“There was no need for him to point up the stream, I tell you. A great yellow mass came round the corner up above, and broke into the mill-pool. It spread a bit then, but still it came on in a regular wall fully a foot high, and thick and muddy. Dan stood staring; but I caught hold of him, ‘Run, man! the bridge’ll go.’ It didn’t go, though; but I’ve often thought since that if it had we might as well have been on top of it as watching the flood from the roadway. I’ll never forget the roar, ending in a sort of smack, as it came up against the masonry. There was a lot of stuff floating, of course; but only small things, till we saw a brownish mass coming down—it came at an awful pace. ‘Here’s a hayrick,’ I said; but just as it reached the ford, I suppose, a rock met it, and it wallowed right over. There wasn’t the least doubt about it—it was half the thatch of a house. Well, I don’t think I’m superstitious; but the only difference between Dan and me was that I said nothing and he spoke out. ‘As sure as death,’ he said, ‘it’s O’Hanlon’s. The whole of them’s drowned.’

“We started running back to the village, when a thought struck me. ‘Go you and give the alarm,’ I said; ‘I’m going up to Cudheen to see would there be anything there.’

"Cudheen was the name of a pool just above the mill-pool, and there was a tongue of gravel sticking out there; it was the sharpest bend on the river. I left Dan and ran across the fields; but when I got to the bank the stream had cut a new course for itself: the spit was gone, and instead of curving in by the left bank, it rushed straight down. Only it had gone down nearly as quick as it had risen, and on the gravel bank at my feet there was a man lying, with only his legs in the water. It was O'Hanlon right enough.

"I dragged him high and dry. There was no use trying to do anything. In a minute Dan and three or four other fellows were up with me. 'Lord save us!' was pretty much all they said. Then Dan spotted a thing I hadn't noticed. The coat was on the man, but twisted round the body, only one arm in the sleeve. And it was a half-made coat, just roughly stitched together.

" 'Do you mind that?' Dan said. 'He was just trying it on when the flood took him. Boys, but it must have been sudden.'

"The more I thought of it, the less I could understand what had happened. I told them to take the body up to the roadside and into the village, and I started up the valley to see what had happened, on the off-chance of giving help. But I had no more doubt in my mind that Biddy O'Hea's curse had been fulfilled to the letter than any of the rest of them.

"I suppose it was about two miles up the road to the bridge, and we ran, or half ran, every step of the way. The rain was over, and it was clearer, if

anything, than it had been; but still everything was that kind of blackish grey. About a mile up we took a short cut across a corner of hill, and as we got to the top of it, I saw a woman along the road on our left. In a little, when she noticed us running, she began to run too. It was Biddy O'Hea. By the time we had got a little farther a car passed us, lashing and galloping, with the priest and the doctor in it, and there was a stream of people all along the road behind us; but I could see the old woman coming along at a kind of shuffling trot in front of them. It was wonderful how she kept up.

"In another couple of minutes we turned the corner—Dan and I had caught hold of the back of the car, and were running with it—and then we saw what had happened. Biddy O'Hea's cottage was in sight plain enough; O'Hanlon's would be hidden by the ground in any case; but there was a long brown scar down the hillside just above it. Dan shouted in my ear—we were all too excited to speak quietly—'The big rock's down on them.' And sure enough the boulder I had noticed sticking out was gone at last, as I suppose all the other boulders had gone century by century, down into the lowest level that the river course had scoured out.

"We crossed the bridge, still hanging to the car, and over the bank into the mountain, before the priest could get down; but the doctor, who was an active young chap, simply took a flying leap at the bank and was with us. The driver left the horse

where he was, and ran too. But over the rough ground I couldn't keep up with Dan and the doctor, as they scrambled like goats among the heather, taking the angler's track along the river.

"There was a tearing great flood, of course, but nothing to account for washing out a house twenty feet up, till we got to the long pool. The water was back between the banks—it would generally be six or seven feet below them—but you could see it had been out till the gorge was filled like a bath. I could see nothing of O'Hanlon's house till I got right to the top of the last rise in the path, and there were Dan and the doctor looking down at it. The farther wall was standing and a bit of the near one, but the whole was heaped with clay and stuff. And right through the three gables of shed and cottage there was a monstrous savage gap, where the stone had bowled through as clean as a ball through a wicket. And there was the stone itself, fair in the throat of the stream at the very narrowest point. The water tore through in a sluice at each side of it, cutting in on the bank like a knife; while I was looking, a great piece of the far side fell with a plop.

"It was plain enough what had happened. A big rain-burst had detached the rock from its holding in the face of the hill; it had rolled down—and probably between the lash of the rain and the roar of the river at their doors the people in the house never even heard the sound of it. It had struck the wall and swept all before it; then lodging in the river-bed dammed

up that terrible flood, and in a few seconds the whole place was a-wash. The little sort of lawn that the house stood in had been six or eight feet deep in water. Then the clay of the banks gave, and the river cut through, sucking out whatever floated, and tearing it along down to the sea. The whole place was as bare as your hand, only that about the walls of the house the loose earth that had been brought down with the falling stone was licked into smooth heaps. And when we came nearer we saw a man's boot sticking up through it.

"We fell to, tearing with our hands. But the clay was washed hard together. 'Where'll we get spades?' I said. 'Go up, Dan, to Biddy O'Hea's, and bring one down,' said the priest. But you should have seen his face when he said it. Dan pretended not to hear him. Then the priest roared at him. 'Ah, sure, what use?' Dan said sulkily. I caught hold of him, saying, 'Come on, Dan.' He went then; but there was no getting him to hurry. I ran on by myself. When I got to the house the door was shut and locked. I knocked first, then I kicked. There was the woman sitting by the fire; she never lifted her head. Two frightened-looking girls had let me in. I said, 'Give me all the spades you have.' They brought me a spade and a slane for turf-cutting, and I ran back. Dan was outside. 'Was she in there?' he asked, with a face of terror. 'Yes,' I said—I was in no humour for talking—'go on with these,' and I gave him the spades. He ran like a hare now, and I came on slower. By the time I got down

there was a crowd about the place. When the clay was all turned over, they had got three bodies out, and a cat and two dogs and a pig. All O'Hanlon's live stock were out that evening, but nothing escaped that was under the roof. One man and a child were crushed right into the ground by the boulder. The man was Johnny O'Hanlon; and I saw big Neil M'Nelis, that he had wanted to fight, sobbing and crying over him; 'Och, Johnny O'Hanlon, is that where you are now? You that was standing up to me that bold this day, and me as big again as you. It was the foul blow you met, Johnny.' But little M'Cormick, the sharp-faced, red-headed little fellow, stood up there in the middle, and his eyes were as red as fire. 'Boys,' he said, 'the rest of them's gone down the river. Where's the bloody witch that done this, till we send her after them?'

"It's a horrible thing to say; but when I thought of that old woman sitting crouched there by the fire, as if she was gloating over the defeat of her enemies, the man's words seemed natural. There wasn't much time to think, though. The priest was standing there, a big, red-faced, coarse-looking man as you could see. He took a step over, and he caught M'Cormick by the throat, and shook him like a rat. 'Would you dare!' he said, 'ye bad Christian! Would you dare, then!' Then he threw the man from him, and he faced round, gathering the whole crowd in front of him with a sweep of his arm. Then he made the sign of the cross in air, and raised one hand.

“ ‘ Go down on your knees, every one of you, and pray for the souls of them that God has cut off without warning in their sins.’

“ It was the strangest thing I ever saw, the change in him from a red-faced bully into the shepherd of his people. The fashion of his countenance changed, as the Bible says. And he prayed there standing over the dead bodies, while the men knelt round him in the twilight—rolling out the Latin words, that neither I nor they understood, in his great Connaught brogue. Then he stopped and spoke to them again. ‘ Now you will say one more Paternoster for the help of a soul that is maybe in worse danger nor theirs, and in saying it you will pray humbly to Almighty God that He may not bring down upon your heads the fulfilment of your own evil desires. And you will leave to the judgement of God the one that invoked God’s judgement.’

“ He began again in the broad Latin, kneeling himself, and they said the prayer after him, sentence by sentence, kneeling there on the wet sod. Then he stood up and shook himself. ‘ Away with you down the river, boys, and search every eddy and back-water, and get nets and dredge the hole. There’s ten bodies needing christian burial, and that’s the last good turn ever you’ll do them.’

“ They broke up in a minute. The priest watched them scatter, some going back to the bridge, some following down the bank. Then he turned up the hill to the woman’s house. I know no more about it;

but I couldn't understand the confidence with which he faced that job when he started up across the heather at a slow pace, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and reciting prayers to himself, for I could see his lips moving. I have often speculated since on the scene there must have been. However, as I said, I know nothing of what happened; except that Biddy O'Hea was always a pattern Christian from that day, and the neighbourhood regarded her with fear certainly, but with a kind of veneration. They were vastly civil to her, I need not tell you—and, what is more, to judge by what I heard since, they are rather proud of her as a local celebrity.

“The bodies were all recovered—most of them in the tideway. But we worked at the river all that night. I couldn't help being grimly amused at the number of nets that were forthcoming in half an hour and the general handiness in working them, and the promptitude and skill that was displayed in getting out torches. I suppose there wasn't a man or boy but had burned the water times and again. I tell you a queer thing, though. There were over fifty salmon taken out that night as they were working the nets—for there had been a tremendous run of fish—but every one of them was put back.

“Oh no, it was no use to me; some other chaps did mighty well on the river before that flood had run down—one man got ten in a morning just above Dohoomiss. But I never threw a line. I didn't care to benefit by St. Brigid's dispensations.”

By
IAN HAY

★

THE JOY OF BATTLE

FROM
A MAN'S MAN

Hughie stepped out of the ferry-boat on to the towpath, which was crowded with young men hastening to the places where the boats were moored and young women who would have been much better employed on the opposite bank.

The punctilious Hughie was looking about for a friendly hedge or other protection behind which he might decorously slip off the white flannel trousers which during the afternoon had been veiling the extreme brevity of his rowing-shorts, when he was tapped upon the shoulder. He turned and found himself faced by a stout clean-shaven man, with eyes that twinkled cheerfully behind round spectacles. He looked like what he was, a country parson of the best type, burly, humorous, and shrewd, with unmistakable traces of the schoolmaster about him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, with a rather old-fashioned bow, "but are you Mr. Marrable?"

Hughie admitted the fact.

"Well, I just want to say that I hope you are

going Head to-night. You are to row Stroke yourself, I hear."

"Yes."

"Quite right, quite right! It's a desperate thing to change your crew about between races, but it's our only chance. You could never have caught them with the man you had last night. He's plucky, but he can't pick a crew up and take them with him. Have you been out in the new order?"

"Yes. We had a short spin a couple of hours ago."

"Satisfactory?"

"Yes, very fair."

"That's excellent. Now we shall see a race!"

The speaker turned and walked beside Hughie in the direction of the Railway Bridge. Hughie wondered who he could be.

"I suppose you are an old member of the College, sir," he said.

"Yes. Haven't been able to come up for fifteen years, though."

"In the crew, perhaps?" continued Hughie, observing his companion's mighty chest—it had slipped down a little in fifteen years—and shoulders.

"Yes"—rather diffidently.

"I thought so. About what year?"

The stranger told him.

Hughie grew interested.

"You must have been in D'Arcy's crew," he said—"the great D'Arcy. My father knew him well. *Were* you?"

"Er—yes."

"My word!" Hughie's eyes blazed at the mention of the name, which, uttered anywhere along the waterside between Putney Bridge and Henley, still rouses young oarsmen to respectful dreams of distant emulation and middle-aged coaches to floods of unreliable reminiscence. "He must have been a wonder in his time. Did you know him well? What sort of chap was he?"

"Well—you see—I *am* D'Arcy," replied the stranger apologetically.

After that he gave Hughie advice about the coming race.

"I have watched the All Saints crew for three nights now," he said. "They are a fine lot, and beautifully together; but it is my opinion that they can't last."

"They're a bit too sure of themselves," said Hughie. "Too many Blues in the boat."

"How many?"

"Four. Seven, Six, Five, and Bow."

"Good! They are probably labouring under the delusion that a boat with four Blues in it is four times as good as a boat with one Blue in it. Consequently they haven't trained very hard, especially those two fat men in the middle of the boat. What about their Stroke?"

"Pretty enough, but a rotter when it comes to the pinch."

"Good again! Well, these fellows have not once been extended during the races, for you gave them

no sort of a run last night. You went to bits at the start and never quite recovered. However, that will give All Saints some false confidence, which is just what we want. Now what do you propose to do to-night? Jump on to their tails at the start?"

"No good," said Hughie. "They are too old birds for that game. Besides, my crew want very carefully working up to a fast stroke. I can't trust Six at anything above thirty-four. He'll go on rowing that all day; but if I quicken up to thirty-six or seven he gets flustered, and forty sends him clean off his nut after about a minute. No, we must just wear them down."

"Quite right," said D'Arcy. "If you are within a length at the Railway Bridge you ought just to do it."

"The difficulty is," said Hughie ruefully, "that the crew are only good for about one spurt. It's a good spurt, I must say, but if it fails we are done. They can never slow down to a steady stroke again—especially Six. So it simply has to be made at the right moment. The difficulty is to know when."

"Have you got a reliable cox?"

"First-class."

"Can't he tell you?"

"Too much row going on," said Hughie. "The whole College will be on the towpath to-night."

The Reverend Montague D'Arcy plunged his hand into the tail-pocket of his clerical frock-coat, and produced therefrom a large-pattern service revolver.

"Look here," he said. "You would be able to hear this lethal weapon on the Day of Judgement itself. Will you consent to take your time from me?"

"Rather! Thank you, sir." There was no doubting the sincerity of Hughie's gratitude.

"Well," continued the clergyman briskly, "I shall wait by the Railway Bridge, on the Barnwell side, away from the towpath. If you have made your bump before that you won't want me. Well and good. But I don't think you *will* have made it, and I don't advise you to try. For the first half of the course those All Saints men will match you stroke for stroke, and if you hustle your heavy man at Six he will probably lose his head. As you pass under the Railway Bridge quicken slightly—not more than two strokes a minute, though. I have six shots in this revolver. When you hear two of them, that will mean that you are getting within jumping distance and must be ready for the spurt. When you hear the remaining four in quick succession you must simply swing out and put the very last ounce of your blood and bones and bodies and souls into it. And if you catch 'em," concluded the reverend gentleman, "by gad! I'll dance the Cachuca on the bank!"

By this time they had reached the spot where their racing-shell—sixty-two feet of flimsy cedar wood—was lying waiting for them. The rest of the crew, already assembled, were standing about in the attitudes of profound dejection or forced hilarity

which appear to be the only alternatives of deportment open to men who are suffering from what is expressively termed "the needle". Some were whistling, others were yawning, and all were wondering why on earth men took up rowing as a pastime.

Hughie gathered his Argonauts into a knot, and at his request the Reverend Montague D'Arcy outlined to them the plan of campaign. Then the crew embarked, and the stout clergyman assisted the grizzled College boatman—the only person present, by the way, whose nerves appeared unaffected by the prevailing tension—to push their craft clear of the bank, and set them going on a half-minute dash as a preliminary to their long paddle down the course to the starting-point of the race.

In accordance with a picturesque but peculiar custom they wore in their straw hats bunches of marigolds and corn-flowers—the College colours—as an intimation that they had achieved bumps during the preceding nights; and so bedecked they paddled majestically down the Long Reach, feeling extremely valorous and looking slightly ridiculous, to challenge a comparison (in which they were hopelessly outclassed from the start) with the headgear of the assembled fair in Ditton Paddock.

The method of sending off a bumping race is the refinement of cruelty.

As each boat reaches its starting-post the crews disembark and stand dismally about, listening to the last exhortations of coaches or nervously eyeing

the crew behind them. Presently an objectionably loud piece of artillery, situated half-way down the long line of boats, goes off with a roar. This is called "first gun", and means chiefly that there will be another in three minutes. The crew mournfully denude themselves of a few more articles of their already scanty wardrobe, which they pile upon the shoulders of the perspiring menial whose duty it is to convey the same to the finishing-post, and crawl one by one into their places in the boat. Finally, the coxswain coils himself into his seat and takes both rudder-lines in his left hand, leaving the right free to grasp the end of the boat's last link with *terra firma*, her starting-chain. Then the second gun goes, and the crew shudder and know that in sixty seconds precisely they must start.

The ritual observed during the final minute is complicated in the extreme, and varies directly with the nervous system of the coach, who dances upon the bank with a stop-watch in his hand, to time the ministrations of the College boatman, who stands by with a long boat-hook ready to prod the vessel into midstream.

"Fifteen seconds gone," says the coach. "Push her out, Ben."

Ben complies, with a maddening but wise deliberation. If the boat is pushed out too promptly the starting-chain will grow taut and tug the stern of the boat inwards towards the bank, just when her nose should be pointing straight upstream. But this

elementary truth does not occur to the frenzied octet in the boat. The gun will go, and bow-side will find their oar-blades still resting on the towpath. They *know* it.

"Thirty seconds gone," says the coach. "Paddle on gently, Bow and Two."

His object is to get the full advantage of the length of the chain, but Bow and Two know better. They are convinced that he merely desires that they shall be caught at a disadvantage when the gun fires. However, they paddle on as requested, with a palsied stealthiness that suggests Musical Chairs.

"Fifteen seconds left," says the coach. "Are you straight, Cox? Ten more sec——"

Ah! As usual the chain has drawn tight, and the stern of the boat is being dragged inwards again.

"Paddle on, Two!" yells the coxswain.

Two gives a couple of frenzied digs; the Dervish with the watch, accompanied by a ragged and inaccurate chorus all down the bank, chants "Five, four, three, two——"; there is a terrific roar from the gun; the coxswain drops the chain; the boatman slips the point of his boat-hook (which, between ourselves, has been doing the lion's share in keeping the ship's head straight) from Five's rigger; and they are off.

The Benedictine crew got under way very unostentatiously. Their coach was actually rowing in the All Saints boat—and it would be difficult to select a more glowing testimonial to the sterling sportsmanship of English rowing—so the starting

operations were wisely left to the College boatman, who had performed the office for something like half a century. The flight of time was recorded by Hughie himself from the watch which hung on his stretcher beside his right foot. The experienced Mr. Dishart-Watson kept those too-often fatally intimate acquaintances, the rudder-lines and starting-chain, tactfully apart, and the St. Benedict's boat got off the mark with a start that brought her within a length of All Saints during the first half-minute.

After that their opponents drew away. As D'Arcy had said, they were a seasoned crew, and nothing short of sheer superiority would wear them down. The two boats swung round Grassy Corner and entered the Plough Reach about their distance apart. All Saints were rowing the faster stroke.

Hughie, who was keeping to a steady thirty-two, felt with satisfaction that the men behind him were well together. Number Seven, small but plucky, was setting bow-side a beautiful example in steady swing and smart finish. Six—Mr. Puffin—was rowing a great blade. To look at him now you would ask why he had not been included in the University Crew. If you saw him trying to row forty to the minute you would marvel that he should be included in any crew at all.

Five was not looking happy. He was lying back too far and tugging at the finish. To him the boat seemed heavier than usual, for he was just beginning to realise the difference between seconding the efforts of Hughie Marrable and those of Mr. Duncombe.

Still, he was plugging gamely. Four, a painstaking person, was encouraging himself in a fashion entirely his own. After every stroke, as he sat up and swung forward, he gasped out some little *sotto voce* remark to himself, such as—"Oh, well *rowed*, Four! . . . Stick to it, Four! . . . Use your *legs*, old man! . . . That's better! . . . That's a *beauty*! . . . Oh, well *rowed*, Four!" And so on. Where he got the necessary breath for these exercises nobody knew; but some folk possess these little peculiarities, and row none the worse for them. Bow was another instance. He was a chirpy but eccentric individual, and used to sing to himself some little ditty of the moment—or possibly a hymn—all through a race, beginning with the first stroke and ending exactly, if possible, with the last. He had been known, when stroking a boat, to quicken up to a perfectly incredible rate simply because he feared that the song would end before he completed the course, a contingency which he regarded as unlucky in the extreme. On the other hand, he would become quite depressed if he had to stop in the middle of a 'verse, and he was quite capable of rowing *rallentando* if he desired to synchronise his two conclusions.

But few people have the time or inclination for these diversions while oscillating upon a sixteen-inch slide, and the rest of the crew were swinging out and plugging in grim silence.

The two boats swept into the roaring medley of Ditton Corner. They flashed past the row of piles

and tethered punts amid a hurricane of shouts and waving handkerchiefs. Hughie, wrongfully exercising his privilege as Stroke, allowed his eyes to slide to the right for a moment. He had a fleeting glimpse of the crimson and excited countenance of Miss Gaymer, as some man held her aloft in the crowd. Then the boat gave a slight lurch, and Joey was swallowed up again. Hughie felt guiltily responsible for the lurch, and recalling his gaze into the proper channel—straight over the coxswain's right shoulder—swung out again long and steadily.

"Are we straight yet?" he gasped to Dishy.

"Yes—just."

"Tell 'em to reach out a bit."

Mr. Watson complied, in tones that rose high above the tumult on the bank and penetrated even into the harmonious soul of Bow, who was grappling with a difficult cadenza at the moment.

"Six good ones!" said Hughie, next time his face swung up towards the coxswain's.

"Now, you men, six good ones!" echoed Dishy.

"*One! Two! Five, you're late! Three! Four! Five!* Bow, get hold of it! *Six!* Oh, well rowed!"

There was a delighted roar from the bank. The Benedictine crew were together again after the unsteadiness round Ditton.

"How far?" signalled Hughie's lips.

"Length—and—a—half," replied Cox. "Less," he added, peering ahead.

They were half-way up the Long Reach now. In

another minute or two they would be at the Railway Bridge, beyond which hard-pressed boats are popularly supposed to be safe.

"Tell 'em—going—quicken," gurgled Hughie—"if can."

Cox nodded, rather doubtfully, and Hughie ground his teeth. If only this accursed noise on the bank would cease, even for five seconds, Dishy would get a chance to make the crew hear. As it was, the ever-increasing crowd, rolling up fresh adherents like a snowball, made that feat almost an impossibility.

But the coxswain was a man of experience and resource. Just as the boat passed under the Railway Bridge itself there was a momentary silence, for the crew were shut off from their supporters by some intervening balks of timber. Dishy seized the opportunity.

"Be ready to quicken," he yelled. "Now! Oh, well done!"

The crew had heard him, and what was more, they had obeyed him. Stroke in the All Saints boat suddenly realised that the oncoming foe had quickened to thirty-five or six, and that the interval between the two boats had shrunk to something under a length. He spurted in his turn, and his men spurted with him, but their length of stroke grew proportionately shorter, and the pace of the boat did not increase. St. Benedict's were holding their advantage.

"Half a length," said Dishy, in response to an agonised interrogation from Hughie's right eyebrow.

Suddenly above the tumult there rang out two reverberating revolver-shots. A stout clergyman, whooping like a Choctaw, was tearing along the right bank of the river, which was practically clear of spectators, with his weapon smoking in his hand. Dishy's voice rose to a scream.

"Look out—be ready! *Only* six feet!"

And now the musical gentleman who was rowing bow felt the boat lift unsteadily under him. A wave rolled across the canvas decking behind him, and he felt a splash of water on his back.

"Washing us off!" was his comment. "Glory, glory! Another verse 'll do it. Now then, all together—

*"What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's——"*

Bang! bang! bang! bang!

The great service revolver rang out. The nose of the Benedictine boat, half submerged in a boiling flood, suddenly sprang to within three feet of the All Saints rudder.

"Now, you men!" Mr. Dishart-Watson's wizened and saturnine countenance shrank suddenly and alarmingly to a mere rim surrounding his mouth. "Just *ten* more! *One—two——*"

Like St. Francis of Assisi, "Of all his body he made a tongue". He counted the strokes in tones that overtopped all the roars of encouragement and apprehension arising from the now hopelessly mixed-up mob of Benedictine and All Saints men that

raged alongside. Hughie Marrable quickened and quickened, and his crew responded sturdily. Faster and faster grew the stroke, and more and more pertinaciously did the nose of the Benedictine boat plough its way through the turbid waves emitted by the twitching rudder in front. Never had they travelled like this. Six was rowing like a man possessed. Four had ceased to encourage himself, and was plugging automatically with his chest open and his eyes shut. Bow may or may not have been singing: he was certainly rowing. There was a world of rolling and splashing, for the All Saints coxswain was manipulating his rudder very skilfully, and ever and again the aggressive nose of the Benedictine boat was sent staggering back by a rolling buffeting wave. But there was no stopping the Benedictines.

Suddenly Dishy gave vent to a final cataclysmic bellow.

“You’re overlapping!”

They were almost at Charon’s Grind. The coxswain’s lank body stiffened in its little seat, and Hughie saw him lean hard over and haul on to the right-hand rudder-line.

“Last three strokes! Now, you devils! *Plug! plug! pl——* Aa—a—ee—ooh—ee—easy all! Oh, well rowed, well rowed, well rowed!”

There was a lurch and a bump.

“Done it! . . . ‘*Bows down to wood and stone,*’” gasped Bow.

The eight men let go their oars and tumbled

forward on to their stretchers, and listened, with their heads and hearts bursting, to the din that raged on the bank.

It was a fine confused moment.

In the boat itself Cox was vainly endeavouring to shake hands with Stroke, who lay doubled up over his oar, with his head right down in the bottom of the boat, oblivious to everything save the blessed fact that he need not row any more. Consciousness that he had taken his crew to the Head of the River was yet to come. At the other end Bow, with his head clasped between his knees, was croaking half-hysterically to himself—"Two bars too soon, Hughie! Oh, my aunt, we've gone Head! Two bars too soon!"

On the towpath every one was shouting and shaking hands with indiscriminate *bonhomie*—this was one of those occasions upon which even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer—and everybody, with one exception, seemed to be ringing a bell or blowing a trumpet. The exception was supplied by a trio of young gentlemen, two of whom held an enormous Chinese gong suspended between them, while a third smote the same unceasingly with a mallet, and cried aloud the name of Marrable.

On the opposite bank of the river a stout, middle-aged, and apparently demented Clerk in Holy Orders was dancing the Cachuca.

By
RUDYARD KIPLING



THE MALTESE CAT

They had good reason to be proud, and better reason to be afraid, all twelve of them; for though they had fought their way, game by game, up the teams entered for the polo tournament, they were meeting the Archangels that afternoon in the final match; and the Archangels' men were playing with half a dozen ponies apiece. As the game was divided into six quarters of eight minutes each, that meant a fresh pony after every halt. The Skidars' team, even supposing there were no accidents, could only supply one pony for every other change; and two to one is heavy odds. Again, as Shiraz, the grey Syrian, pointed out, they were meeting the pink and pick of the polo-ponies of Upper India, ponies that had cost from a thousand rupees each, while they themselves were a cheap lot gathered, often from country-carts, by their masters, who belonged to a poor but honest native infantry regiment.

"Money means pace and weight," said Shiraz, rubbing his black-silk nose dolefully along his neat-fitting boot, "and by the maxims of the game as I know it——"

"Ah, but we aren't playing the maxims," said The Maltese Cat. "We're playing the game; and we've the great advantage of knowing the game. Just think a stride, Shiraz! We've pulled up from bottom to second place in two weeks against all those fellows on the ground here. That's because we play with our heads as well as our feet."

"It makes me feel undersized and unhappy all the same," said Kittiwynk, a mouse-coloured mare with a red brow-band and the cleanest pair of legs that ever an aged pony owned. "They've twice our style, these others."

Kittiwynk looked at the gathering and sighed. The hard, dusty polo-ground was lined with thousands of soldiers, black and white, not counting hundreds and hundreds of carriages and drags and dog-carts, and ladies with brilliant-coloured parasols, and officers in uniform and out of it, and crowds of natives behind them; and orderlies on camels, who had halted to watch the game, instead of carrying letters up and down the station; and native horse-dealers running about on thin-eared Biluchi mares, looking for a chance to sell a few first-class polo-ponies. Then there were the ponies of thirty teams that had entered for the Upper India Free-for-All Cup—nearly every pony of worth and dignity, from Mhow to Peshawar, from Allahabad to Multan; prize ponies, Arabs, Syrian, Barb, country-bred, Deccanee, Waziri, and Kabul ponies of every colour and shape and temper that you could imagine. Some of them were in mat-roofed

stables, close to the polo-ground, but most were under saddle, while their masters, who had been defeated in the earlier games, trotted in and out and told the world exactly how the game should be played.

It was a glorious sight, and the come and go of the little, quick hooves, and the incessant salutations of ponies that had met before on other polo-grounds or race-courses were enough to drive a four-footed thing wild.

But the Skidars' team were careful not to know their neighbours, though half the ponies on the ground were anxious to scrape acquaintance with the little fellows that had come from the North, and, so far, had swept the board.

"Let's see," said a soft gold-coloured Arab, who had been playing very badly the day before, to The Maltese Cat; "didn't we meet in Abdul Rahman's stable in Bombay, four seasons ago? I won the Paik-pattan Cup next season, you may remember?"

"Not me," said The Maltese Cat, politely. "I was at Malta then, pulling a vegetable-cart. I don't race. I play the game."

"Oh!" said the Arab, cocking his tail and swaggering off.

"Keep yourselves to yourselves," said The Maltese Cat to his companions. "We don't want to rub noses with all those goose-rumped half-breeds of Upper India. When we've won this Cup they'll give their shoes to know us."

"We shan't win the Cup," said Shiraz. "How do you feel?"

"Stale as last night's feed when a muskrat has run over it," said Polaris, a rather heavy-shouldered grey; and the rest of the team agreed with him.

"The sooner you forget that the better," said The Maltese Cat, cheerfully. "They've finished tiffin in the big tent. We shall be wanted now. If your saddles are not comfy, kick. If your bits aren't easy, rear, and let the *saises* know whether your boots are tight."

Each pony had his *sais*, his groom, who lived and ate and slept with the animal, and had betted a good deal more than he could afford on the result of the game. There was no chance of anything going wrong, but to make sure, each *sais* was shampooing the legs of his pony to the last minute. Behind the *saises* sat as many of the Skidars' regiment as had leave to attend the match—about half the native officers, and a hundred or two dark, black-bearded men with the regimental pipers nervously fingering the big, beribboned bagpipes. The Skidars were what they call a Pioneer regiment, and the bagpipes made the national music of half their men. The native officers held bundles of polo-sticks, long cane-handled mallets, and as the grandstand filled after lunch they arranged themselves by ones and twos at different points round the ground, so that if a stick were broken the player would not have far to ride for a new one. An impatient British Cavalry Band struck up "If you want to know the time, ask a p'leeceman!" and the two umpires in light dust-coats danced out on two little excited ponies. The four players of the Archangels' team followed, and the

sight of their beautiful mounts made Shiraz groan again.

"Wait till we know," said The Maltese Cat. "Two of 'em are playing in blinkers, and that means they can't see to get out of the way of their own side, or they *may* shy at the umpires' ponies. They've *all* got white web-reins that are sure to stretch or slip!"

"And," said Kittiwynk, dancing to take the stiffness out of her, "they carry their whips in their hands instead of on their wrists. Hah!"

"True enough. No man can manage his stick and his reins and his whip that way," said The Maltese Cat. "I've fallen over every square yard of the Malta ground, and I ought to know."

He quivered his little, flea-bitten withers just to show how satisfied he felt; but his heart was not so light. Ever since he had drifted into India on a troopship, taken, with an old rifle, as part payment for a racing debt, The Maltese Cat had played and preached polo to the Skidars' team on the Skidars' stony polo-ground. Now a polo-pony is like a poet. If he is born with a love for the game, he can be made. The Maltese Cat knew that bamboos grew solely in order that polo-balls might be turned from their roots, that grain was given to ponies to keep them in hard condition, and that ponies were shod to prevent them slipping on a turn. But, besides all these things, he knew every trick and device of the finest game in the world, and for two seasons had been teaching the others all he knew or guessed.

"Remember," he said for the hundredth time, as the riders came up, "you *must* play together, and you *must* play with your heads. Whatever happens, follow the ball. Who goes out first?"

Kittiwynk, Shiraz, Polaris, and a short high little bay fellow with tremendous hocks and no withers worth speaking of (he was called Corks) were being girthed up, and the soldiers in the background stared with all their eyes.

"I want you men to keep quiet," said Lutyens, the captain of the team, "and especially not to blow your pipes."

"Not if we win, Captain Sahib?" asked the piper.

"If we win you can do what you please," said Lutyens, with a smile, as he slipped the loop of his stick over his wrist, and wheeled to canter to his place. The Archangels' ponies were a little bit above themselves on account of the many-coloured crowd so close to the ground. Their riders were excellent players, but they were a team of crack players instead of a crack team; and that made all the difference in the world. They honestly meant to play together, but it is very hard for four men, each the best of the team he is picked from, to remember that in polo no brilliancy in hitting or riding makes up for playing alone. Their captain shouted his orders to them by name, and it is a curious thing that if you call his name aloud in public after an Englishman you make him hot and fretty. Lutyens said nothing to his men, because it had all been said before. He pulled up Shiraz, for he was playing

“back”, to guard the goal. Powell on Polaris was half-back, and Macnamara and Hughes on Corks and Kittiwynk were forwards. The tough, bamboo ball was set in the middle of the ground, one hundred and fifty yards from the ends, and Hughes crossed sticks, heads up, with the Captain of the Archangels, who saw fit to play forward; that is a place from which you cannot easily control your team. The little click as the cane-shafts met was heard all over the ground, and then Hughes made some sort of quick wrist-stroke that just dribbled the ball a few yards. Kittiwynk knew that stroke of old, and followed as a cat follows a mouse. While the Captain of the Archangels was wrenching his pony round, Hughes struck with all his strength, and next instant Kittiwynk was away, Corks following close behind her, their little feet pattering like raindrops on glass.

“Pull out to the left,” said Kittiwynk between her teeth; “it’s coming your way, Corks!”

The back and half-back of the Archangels were tearing down on her just as she was within reach of the ball. Hughes leaned forward with a loose rein, and cut it away to the left almost under Kittiwynk’s foot, and it hopped and skipped off to Corks, who saw that if he was not quick it would run beyond the boundaries. That long bouncing drive gave the Archangels time to wheel and send three men across the ground to head off Corks. Kittiwynk stayed where she was; for she knew the game. Corks was on the ball half a fraction of a second before the others came up,

and Macnamara, with a backhanded stroke, sent it back across the ground to Hughes, who saw the way clear to the Archangels' goal, and smacked the ball in before any one quite knew what had happened.

"That's luck," said Corks, as they changed ends. "A goal in three minutes for three hits, and no riding to speak of."

"Don't know," said Polaris. "We've made 'em angry too soon. Shouldn't wonder if they tried to rush us off our feet next time."

"Keep the ball hanging, then," said Shiraz. "That wears out every pony that is not used to it."

Next time there was no easy galloping across the ground. All the Archangels closed up as one man, but there they stayed, for Corks, Kittiwynk, and Polaris were somewhere on the top of the ball, marking time among the rattling sticks, while Shiraz circled about outside, waiting for a chance.

"We can do this all day," said Polaris, ramming his quarters into the side of another pony. "Where do you think you're shoving to?"

"I'll—I'll be driven in an *ekka* if I know," was the gasping reply, "and I'd give a week's feed to get my blinkers off. I can't see anything."

"The dust is rather bad. Whew! That was one for my off-hock. Where's the ball, Corks?"

"Under my tail. At least, the man's looking for it there! This is beautiful. They can't use their sticks, and it's driving 'em wild. Give old Blinkers a push and then he'll go over."

"Here, don't touch me! I can't see. I'll—I'll back out, I think," said the pony in blinkers, who knew that if you can't see all round your head, you cannot prop yourself against the shock.

Corks was watching the ball where it lay in the dust, close to his near fore-leg, with Macnamara's shortened stick tap-tapping it from time to time. Kittiwynk was edging her way out of the scrimmage, whisking her stump of a tail with nervous excitement.

"Ho! They've got it," she snorted. "Let me out!" and she galloped like a rifle-bullet just behind a tall lanky pony of the Archangels, whose rider was swinging up his stick for a stroke.

"Not to-day, thank you," said Hughes, as the blow slid off his raised stick, and Kittiwynk laid her shoulder to the tall pony's quarters, and shoved him aside just as Lutyens on Shiraz sent the ball where it had come from, and the tall pony went skating and slipping away to the left. Kittiwynk, seeing that Polaris had joined Corks in the chase for the ball up the ground, dropped into Polaris' place, and then "time" was called.

The Skidars' ponies wasted no time in kicking or fuming. They knew that each minute's rest meant so much gain, and trotted off to the rails, and their *saises* began to scrape and blanket and rub them at once. .

"Whew!" said Corks, stiffening up to get all the tickle of the big vulcanite scraper. "If we were playing pony for pony, we would bend those Archangels double in half an hour. But they'll bring up fresh

ones and fresh ones and fresh ones after that—you see."

"Who cares?" said Polaris. "We've drawn first blood. Is my hock swelling?"

"Looks puffy," said Corks. "You must have had rather a wipe. Don't let it stiffen. You'll be wanted again in half an hour."

"What's the game like?" said The Maltese Cat.

"'Ground's like your shoe, except where they put too much water on it," said Kittiwynk. "Then it's slippery. Don't play in the centre. There's a bog there. I don't know how their next four are going to behave, but we kept the ball hanging, and made 'em lather for nothing. Who goes out? Two Arabs and a couple of country-breds! That's bad. What a comfort it is to wash your mouth out!"

Kitty was talking with a neck of a lather-covered soda-water bottle between her teeth, and trying to look over her withers at the same time. This gave her a very coquettish air.

"What's bad?" said Grey Dawn, giving to the girth and admiring his well-set shoulders.

"You Arabs can't gallop fast enough to keep yourselves warm—that's what Kitty means," said Polaris, limping to show that his hock needed attention. "Are you playing back, Grey Dawn?"

"Looks like it," said Grey Dawn, as Lutyens swung himself up. Powell mounted The Rabbit, a plain bay country-bred much like Corks, but with mulish ears. Macnamara took Faiz-Ullah, a handy,

short-backed little red Arab with a long tail, and Hughes mounted Benami, an old and sullen brown beast, who stood over in front more than a polo-pony should.

"Benami looks like business," said Shiraz. "How's your temper, Ben?" The old campaigner hobbled off without answering, and The Maltese Cat looked at the new Archangel ponies prancing about on the ground. They were four beautiful blacks, and they saddled big enough and strong enough to eat the Skidars' team and gallop away with the meal inside them.

"Blinkers again," said The Maltese Cat. "Good enough!"

"They're chargers—cavalry chargers!" said Kitti-wynk, indignantly. "*They'll* never see thirteen-three again."

"They've all been fairly measured, and they've all got their certificates," said The Maltese Cat, "or they wouldn't be here. We must take things as they come along, and keep your eyes on the ball."

The game began, but this time the Skidars were penned to their own end of the ground, and the watching ponies did not approve of that.

"Faiz-Ullah is shirking—as usual," said Polaris, with a scornful grunt.

"Faiz-Ullah is eating whip," said Corks. They could hear the leather-thonged polo-quirt lacing the little fellow's well-rounded barrel. Then The Rabbit's shrill neigh came across the ground.

"I can't do all the work," he cried, desperately.

"Play the game—don't talk," The Maltese Cat whickered; and all the ponies wriggled with excitement, and the soldiers and the grooms gripped the railings and shouted. A black pony with blinkers had singled out old Benami, and was interfering with him in every possible way. They could see Benami shaking his head up and down, and flapping his under lip.

"There'll be a fall in a minute," said Polaris. "Benami is getting stuffy."

The game flickered up and down between goal-post and goal-post, and the black ponies were getting more confident as they felt they had the legs of the others. The ball was hit out of a little scrimmage, and Benami and The Rabbit followed it, Faiz-Ullah only too glad to be quiet for an instant.

The blinkered black pony came up like a hawk, with two of his own side behind him, and Benami's eye glittered as he raced. The question was which pony should make way for the other, for each rider was perfectly willing to risk a fall in a good cause. The black, who had been driven nearly crazy by his blinkers, trusted to his weight and his temper; but Benami knew how to apply his weight and how to keep his temper. They met, and there was a cloud of dust. The black was lying on his side, all the breath knocked out of his body. The Rabbit was a hundred yards up the ground with the ball, and Benami was sitting down. He had slid nearly ten yards on his tail, but he had had his revenge, and sat cracking his nostrils till the black pony rose.

“ That’s what you get for interfering. Do you want any more? ” said Benami, and he plunged into the game. Nothing was done that quarter, because Faiz-Ullah would not gallop, though Macnamara beat him whenever he could spare a second. The fall of the black pony had impressed his companions tremendously, and so the Archangels could not profit by Faiz-Ullah’s bad behaviour.

But as The Maltese Cat said when “ time ” was called, and the four came back blowing and dripping, Faiz-Ullah ought to have been kicked all round Umballa. If he did not behave better next time The Maltese Cat promised to pull out his Arab tail by the roots and—eat it.

There was no time to talk, for the third four were ordered out.

The third quarter of a game is generally the hottest, for each side thinks that the others must be pumped, and most of the winning play in a game is made about that time.

Lutyens took over The Maltese Cat with a pat and a hug, for Lutyens valued him more than anything else in the world; Powell had Shikast, a little grey rat with no pedigree and no manners outside polo; Macnamara mounted Bamboo, the largest of the team; and Hughes Who’s Who, alias The Animal. He was supposed to have Australian blood in his veins, but he looked like a clothes-horse, and you could whack his legs with an iron crow-bar without hurting him.

They went out to meet the very flower of the Arch-

angels' team; and when Who's Who saw their elegantly booted legs and their beautiful satin skins, he grinned a grin through his light, well-worn bridle.

"My word!" said Who's Who. "We must give 'em a little football. These gentlemen need a rubbing down."

"No biting," said The Maltese Cat, warningly; for once or twice in his career Who's Who had been known to forget himself in that way.

"Who said anything about biting? I'm not playing tiddly-winks. I'm playing the game."

The Archangels came down like a wolf on the fold, for they were tired of football, and they wanted polo. They got it more and more. Just after the game began, Lutyens hit a ball that was coming towards him rapidly, and it rolled in the air, as a ball sometimes will, with the whirl of a frightened partridge. Shikast heard, but could not see it for the minute, though he looked everywhere and up into the air as The Maltese Cat had taught him. When he saw it ahead and overhead he went forward with Powell as fast as he could put foot to ground. It was then that Powell, a quiet and level-headed man, as a rule, became inspired, and played a stroke that sometimes comes off successfully after long practice. He took his stick in both hands, and, standing up in his stirrups, swiped at the ball in the air, Munipore fashion. There was one second of paralysed astonishment, and then all four sides of the ground went up in a yell of applause and delight as the ball flew true (you could see the amazed Archangels ducking in their saddles to dodge the line of flight,

and looking at it with open mouths), and the regimental pipes of the Skidars squealed from the railings as long as the pipers had breath.

Shikast heard the stroke; but he heard the head of the stick fly off at the same time. Nine hundred and ninety-nine ponies out of a thousand would have gone tearing on after the ball with a useless player pulling at their heads; but Powell knew him, and he knew Powell; and the instant he felt Powell's right leg shift a trifle on the saddle-flap, he headed to the boundary, where a native officer was frantically waving a new stick. Before the shouts had ended, Powell was armed again.

Once before in his life The Maltese Cat had heard that very same stroke played off his own back, and had profited by the confusion it wrought. This time he acted on experience, and leaving Bamboo to guard the goal in case of accidents, came through the others like a flash, head and tail low—Lutyens standing up to ease him—swept on and on before the other side knew what was the matter, and nearly pitched on his head between the Archangels' goal-posts as Lutyens kicked the ball in after a straight scurry of a hundred and fifty yards. If there was one thing more than another upon which The Maltese Cat prided himself, it was on this quick, streaking kind of run half across the ground. He did not believe in taking balls round the field unless you were clearly overmatched. After this they gave the Archangels five-minuted football; and an expensive fast pony hates football because it rumpled his temper.

Who's Who showed himself even better than Polaris in this game. He did not permit any wriggling away, but bored joyfully into the scrimmage as if he had his nose in a feed-box and was looking for something nice. Little Shikast jumped on the ball the minute it got clear, and every time an Archangel pony followed it, he found Shikast standing over it, asking what was the matter.

"If we can live through this quarter," said The Maltese Cat, "I shan't care. Don't take it out of yourselves. Let them do the lathering."

So the ponies, as their riders explained afterwards, "shut-up". The Archangels kept them tied fast in front of their goal, but it cost the Archangels' ponies all that was left of their tempers; and ponies began to kick, and men began to repeat compliments, and they chopped at the legs of Who's Who, and he set his teeth and stayed where he was, and the dust stood up like a tree over the scrimmage until that hot quarter ended.

They found the ponies very excited and confident when they went to their *saises*; and The Maltese Cat had to warn them that the worst of the game was coming.

"Now *we* are all going in for the second time," said he, "and *they* are trotting out fresh ponies. You think you can gallop, but you'll find you can't; and then you'll be sorry."

"But two goals to nothing is a halter-long lead," said Kittiwynk, prancing.

"How long does it take to get a goal?" The Maltese Cat answered. "For pity's sake, don't run away with a notion that the game is half-won just because we happen to be in luck *now*! They'll ride you into the grandstand, if they can; you must not give 'em a chance. Follow the ball."

"Football, as usual?" said Polaris. "My hock's half as big as a nose-bag."

"Don't let them have a look at the ball, if you can help it. Now leave me alone. I must get all the rest I can before the last quarter."

He hung down his head and let all his muscles go slack, Shikast, Bamboo, and Who's Who copying his example.

"Better not watch the game," he said. "We aren't playing, and we shall only take it out of ourselves if we grow anxious. Look at the ground and pretend it's fly-time."

They did their best, but it was hard advice to follow. The hooves were drumming and the sticks were rattling all up and down the ground, and yells of applause from the English troops told that the Archangels were pressing the Skidars hard. The native soldiers behind the ponies groaned and grunted, and said things in under-tones, and presently they heard a long-drawn shout and a clatter of hurrahs!

"One to the Archangels," said Shikast, without raising his head. "Time's nearly up. Oh, my sire—and *dam*!"

"Faiz-Ullah," said The Maltese Cat, "if you don't

play to the last nail in your shoes this time, I'll kick you on the ground before all the other ponies."

"I'll do my best when my time comes," said the little Arab, sturdily.

The *saises* looked at each other gravely as they rubbed their ponies' legs. This was the time when long purses began to tell, and everybody knew it. Kittiwynk and the others came back, the sweat dripping over their hooves and their tails telling sad stories.

"They're better than we are," said Shiraz. "I knew how it would be."

"Shut your big head," said The Maltese Cat; "we've one goal to the good yet."

"Yes; but it's two Arabs and two country-breds to play now," said Corks. "Faiz-Ullah, remember!" He spoke in a biting voice.

As Lutyens mounted Grey Dawn he looked at his men, and they did not look pretty. They were covered with dust and sweat in streaks. Their yellow boots were almost black, their wrists were red and lumpy, and their eyes seemed two inches deep in their heads; but the expression in the eyes was satisfactory.

"Did you take anything at tiffin?" said Lutyens; and the team shook their heads. They were too dry to talk.

"All right. The Archangels did. They are worse pumped than we are."

"They've got the better ponies," said Powell. "I shan't be sorry when this business is over."

That fifth quarter was a painful one in every way.

Faiz-Ullah played like a little red demon, and The Rabbit seemed to be everywhere at once, and Benami rode straight at anything and everything that came in his way; while the umpires on their ponies wheeled like gulls outside the shifting game. But the Archangels had the better mounts—they had kept their racers till late in the game—and never allowed the Skidars to play football. They hit the ball up and down the width of the ground till Benami and the rest were out-paced. Then they went forward, and time and again Lutyens and Grey Dawn were just, and only just, able to send the ball away with a long, spitting backhander. Grey Dawn forgot that he was an Arab; and turned from grey to blue as he galloped. Indeed, he forgot too well, for he did not keep his eyes on the ground as an Arab should, but stuck out his nose and scuttled for the dear honour of the game. They had watered the ground once or twice between the quarters, and a careless waterman had emptied the last of his skinful all in one place near the Skidars' goal. It was close to the end of the play, and for the tenth time Grey Dawn was bolting after the ball, when his near hind-foot slipped on the greasy mud, and he rolled over and over, pitching Lutyens just clear of the goal-post; and the triumphant Archangels made their goal. Then "time" was called—two goals all; but Lutyens had to be helped up, and Grey Dawn rose with his near hind-leg strained somewhere.

"What's the damage?" said Powell, his arm around Lutyens.

"Collar-bone, *of course*," said Lutyens, between his teeth. It was the third time he had broken it in two years, and it hurt him.

Powell and the others whistled.

"Game's up," said Hughes.

"Hold on. We've five good minutes yet, and it isn't my right hand. We'll stick it out."

"I say," said the Captain of the Archangels, trotting up, "are you hurt, Lutyens? We'll wait if you care to put in a substitute. I wish—I mean—the fact is, you fellows deserve this game if any team does. 'Wish we could give you a man, or some of our ponies—or something.'"

"You're awfully good, but we'll play it to a finish, I think."

The Captain of the Archangels stared for a little. "That's not half bad," he said, and went back to his own side, while Lutyens borrowed a scarf from one of his native officers and made a sling of it. Then an Archangel galloped up with a big bath-sponge, and advised Lutyens to put it under his armpit to ease his shoulder, and between them they tied up his left arm scientifically; and one of the native officers leaped forward with four long glasses that fizzed and bubbled.

The team looked at Lutyens piteously, and he nodded. It was the last quarter, and nothing would matter after that. They drank out the dark golden drink, and wiped their moustaches, and things looked more hopeful.

The Maltese Cat had put his nose into the front of

Lutyens' shirt and was trying to say how sorry he was.

"He knows," said Lutyens, proudly. "The beggar knows. I've played him without a bridle before now—for fun."

"It's no fun now," said Powell. "But we haven't a decent substitute."

"No," said Lutyens. "It's the last quarter, and we've got to make our goal and win. I'll trust The Cat."

"If you fall this time, you'll suffer a little," said Macnamara.

"I'll trust The Cat," said Lutyens.

"You hear that?" said The Maltese Cat, proudly, to the others. "It's worth while playing polo for ten years to have that said of you. Now then, my sons, come along. We'll kick up a little bit, just to show the Archangels this team haven't suffered."

And, sure enough, as they went on to the ground, The Maltese Cat, after satisfying himself that Lutyens was home in the saddle, kicked out three or four times, and Lutyens laughed. The reins were caught up anyhow in the tips of his strapped left hand, and he never pretended to rely on them. He knew The Cat would answer to the least pressure of the leg, and by way of showing-off—for his shoulder hurt him very much—he bent the little fellow in a close figure-of-eight in and out between the goal-posts. There was a roar from the native officers and men, who dearly loved a piece of *dugabashi* (horse-trick work), as they called it, and the pipes very quietly and scornfully droned out the first

bars of a common bazaar tune called "Freshly Fresh and Newly New", just as a warning to the other regiments that the Skidars were fit. All the natives laughed.

"And now," said The Maltese Cat, as they took their place, "remember that this is the last quarter, and follow the ball!"

"Don't need to be told," said Who's Who.

"Let me go on. All those people on all four sides will begin to crowd in—just as they did at Malta. You'll hear people calling out, and moving forward and being pushed back; and that is going to make the Archangel ponies very unhappy. But if a ball is struck to the boundary, you go after it, and let the people get out of your way. I went over the pole of a four-in-hand once, and picked a game out of the dust by it. Back me up when I run, and follow the ball."

There was a sort of an all-round sound of sympathy and wonder as the last quarter opened, and then there began exactly what The Maltese Cat had foreseen. People crowded in close to the boundaries, and the Archangels' ponies kept looking sideways at the narrowing space. If you know how a man feels to be cramped at tennis—not because he wants to run out of the court, but because he likes to know that he can at a pinch—you will guess how ponies must feel when they are playing in a box of human beings.

"I'll bend some of those men if I can get away," said Who's Who, as he rocketed behind the ball; and Bamboo nodded without speaking. They were playing the last ounce in them, and The Maltese Cat had left

the goal undefended to join them. Lutyens gave him every order that he could to bring him back, but this was the first time in his career that the little wise grey had ever played polo on his own responsibility, and he was going to make the most of it.

"What are you doing here?" said Hughes, as The Cat crossed in front of him and rode off an Archangel.

"The Cat's in charge—mind the goal!" shouted Lutyens, and bowing forward hit the ball full, and followed on, forcing the Archangels towards their own goal.

"No football," said The Maltese Cat. "Keep the ball by the boundaries and cramp 'em. Play open order, and drive 'em to the boundaries."

Across and across the ground in big diagonals flew the ball, and whenever it came to a flying rush and a stroke **close** to the boundaries the Archangel ponies moved stiffly. They did not care to go headlong at a wall of men and carriages, though if the ground had been open they could have turned on a sixpence.

"Wriggle her up the sides," said The Cat. "Keep her close to the crowd. They hate the carriages. Shikast, keep her up this side."

Shikast and Powell lay left and right behind the uneasy scuffle of an open scrimmage, and every time the ball was hit away Shikast galloped on it at such an angle that Powell was forced to hit it towards the boundary; and when the crowd had been driven away from that side, Lutyens would send the ball over to the other, and Shikast would slide desperately after it

till his friends came down to help. It was billiards, and no football, this time—billiards in a corner pocket; and the cues were not well chalked.

“If they get us out in the middle of the ground they’ll walk away from us. Dribble her along the sides,” cried The Maltese Cat.

So they dribbled all along the boundary, where a pony could not come on their right-hand side; and the Archangels were furious, and the umpires had to neglect the game to shout at the people to get back, and several blundering mounted policemen tried to restore order, all close to the scrimmage, and the nerves of the Archangels’ ponies stretched and broke like cob-webs.

Five or six times an Archangel hit the ball up into the middle of the ground, and each time the watchful Shikast gave Powell his chance to send it back, and after each return, when the dust had settled, men could see that the Skidars had gained a few yards.

Every now and again there were shouts of “Side! Off side!” from the spectators; but the teams were too busy to care, and the umpires had all they could do to keep their maddened ponies clear of the scuffle.

At last Lutyens missed a short easy stroke, and the Skidars had to fly back helter-skelter to protect their own goal, Shikast leading. Powell stopped the ball with a backhander when it was not fifty yards from the goal-posts, and Shikast spun round with a wrench that nearly hoisted Powell out of his saddle.

“Now’s our last chance,” said The Cat, wheeling

like a cockchafer on a pin. "We've got to ride it out. Come along."

Lutyens felt the little chap take a deep breath, and, as it were, crouch under his rider. The ball was hopping towards the right-hand boundary, an Archangel riding for it with both spurs and a whip; but neither spur nor whip would make his pony stretch himself as he neared the crowd. The Maltese Cat glided under his very nose, picking up his hind legs sharp, for there was not a foot to spare between his quarters and the other pony's bit. It was as neat an exhibition as fancy figure-skating. Lutyens hit with all the strength he had left, but the stick slipped a little in his hand, and the ball flew off to the left instead of keeping close to the boundary. Who's Who was far across the ground, thinking hard as he galloped. He repeated stride for stride The Cat's manœuvres with another Archangel pony, nipping the ball away from under his bridle, and clearing his opponent by half a fraction of an inch, for Who's Who was clumsy behind. Then he drove away towards the right as The Maltese Cat came up from the left; and Bamboo held a middle course exactly between them. The three were making a sort of Government-broad-arrow-shaped attack; and there was only the Archangels' back to guard the goal; but immediately behind them were three Archangels racing all they knew, and mixed up with them was Powell sending Shikast along on what he felt was their last hope. It takes a very good man to stand up to the rush of seven crazy ponies in the last quarters

of a Cup game, when men are riding with their necks for sale, and the ponies are delirious. The Archangels' back missed his stroke and pulled aside just in time to let the rush go by. Bamboo and Who's Who shortened stride to give The Cat room, and Lutyens got the goal with a clean, smooth, smacking stroke that was heard all over the field. But there was no stopping the ponies. They poured through the goal-posts in one mixed mob, winners and losers together, for the pace had been terrific. The Maltese Cat knew by experience what would happen, and, to save Lutyens, turned to the right with one last effort, that strained a back-sinew beyond hope of repair. As he did so he heard the right-hand goal-post crack as a pony cannoned into it—crack, splinter and fall like a mast. It had been sawed three parts through in case of accidents, but it upset the pony nevertheless, and he blundered into another, who blundered into the left-hand post, and then there was confusion and dust and wood. Bamboo was lying on the ground, seeing stars; an Archangel pony rolled beside him, breathless and angry; Shikast had sat down dog-fashion to avoid falling over the others, and was sliding along on his little bobtail in a cloud of dust; and Powell was sitting on the ground, hammering with his stick and trying to cheer. All the others were shouting at the top of what was left of their voices, and the men who had been spilt were shouting too. As soon as the people saw no one was hurt, ten thousand native and English shouted and clapped and yelled, and before any one

could stop them the pipers of the Skidars broke on to the ground, with all the native officers and men behind them, and marched up and down, playing a wild Northern tune called "Zakhme Bagán," and through the insolent blaring of the pipes and the high-pitched native yells you could hear the Archangels' band hammering, "For they are all jolly good fellows," and then reproachfully to the losing team, "Ooh, Kafoozalum! Kafoozalum! Kafoozalum!"

Besides all these things and many more, there was a Commander-in-chief, and an Inspector-General of Cavalry, and the principal veterinary officer of all India standing on the top of a regimental coach, yelling like school-boys; and brigadiers and colonels and commissioners, and hundreds of pretty ladies joined the chorus. But The Maltese Cat stood with his head down, wondering how many legs were left to him; and Lutyens watched the men and ponies pick themselves out of the wreck of the two goal-posts, and he patted The Maltese Cat very tenderly.

"I say," said the Captain of the Archangels, spitting a pebble out of his mouth, "will you take three thousand for that pony—as he stands?"

"No, thank you. I've an idea he's saved my life," said Lutyens, getting off and lying down at full length. Both teams were on the ground too, waving their boots in the air, and coughing and drawing deep breaths, as the *saises* ran up to take away the ponies, and an officious water-carrier sprinkled the players with dirty water till they sat up.

"My aunt!" said Powell, rubbing his back, and looking at the stumps of the goal-posts. "That was a game!"

They played it over again, every stroke of it, that night at the big dinner, when the Free-for-All Cup was filled and passed down the table, and emptied and filled again, and everybody made most eloquent speeches. About two in the morning, when there might have been some singing, a wise little, plain little, grey little head looked in through the open door.

"Hurrray! Bring him in," said the Archangels; and his *sais*, who was very happy indeed, patted The Maltese Cat on the flank, and he limped in to the blaze of light and the glittering uniforms, looking for Lutyens. He was used to messes, and men's bedrooms, and places where ponies are not usually encouraged, and in his youth had jumped on and off a mess-table for a bet. So he behaved himself very politely, and ate bread dipped in salt, and was petted all round the table, moving gingerly; and they drank his health, because he had done more to win the Cup than any man or horse on the ground.

That was glory and honour enough for the rest of his days, and The Maltese Cat did not complain much when the veterinary surgeon said that he would be no good for polo any more. When Lutyens married, his wife did not allow him to play, so he was forced to be an umpire; and his pony on these occasions was a flea-bitten grey with a neat polo-tail, lame all round, but desperately quick on his feet, and, as everybody knew, Past Pluperfect Prestissimo Player of the Game.

By
WESTON MARTYR



A LITTLE SAIL

"I have passed many landes and manye yles and contrees, and cherched many full straunge places . . . Now I am comen home to reste."—SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE.

Once upon a time I was invited to spend a few days on a farm in Essex, and, being a sailor, I naturally jumped at the chance to discover finally what real degree of truth might lie behind that veiled implication—"Who'd sell a farm and go to sea?"—which I had listened to many a time growled out by old shell-backs momentarily disgusted with the treatment meted out to them by the element on whose implacable bosom they had chosen to work and to live. My imagination had, of course, created many pictures for me of farms and of the life on farms, but that Essex farmhouse, when I found it, proved to be distinctly unlike anything that I had ever dreamed.

Wicklea Wick, or Wickilywick, as the natives say, was as quaint as its quaint name. It stood, like an island, in the midst of a lone expanse of wistful marshland, painted by the placid evening light in soft and sleepy tints, and full of the plaintive cries of birds.

Around the house I found a moat—a veritable moat—with duck swimming in it; wild ones, too, for they all flew away as I walked up, over what must once have been the drawbridge, under a rounded Saxon arch and into a stone-paved hall. That hall had in it an open fireplace, ten feet square if it was an inch, and on one wall, stuck there like some giant swallow's nest, was a minstrels' gallery.

Now, it occurs to me that all these things may seem quite natural, but to a man whose feet have merely touched his country's pavements, and who has rarely trodden on his native soil, the moat and the minstrels' gallery appeared to be quite out of place—and out of time too; six or seven hundred years out at that. Earlier in the day I had stayed my journey in the ancient British hamlet of St. Osyth, and there drunken a tankard of something which I was assured was "real old oyster-feast," so now I began to wonder if perhaps the strength of that strange liquor . . .

But my host appearing then, I knew, improbable though it seemed, that I was neither drunk nor dreaming, but merely a pilgrim lost in an England where—I made up my mind to it then and there—I was likely to happen on anything. It was as well for me that I decided to adopt this attitude of mind so early in the proceedings, for presently I found my fellow-guests to be the illustrious members of a far-famed company, resting after their play's successful run, together with a gentleman from the lap of the old Imperial Court in Peking; proud, yellow, and

aristocratic, Mr. Van Ping by name. Of course, if one be fortunate, one may meet such individuals as these without the fact appearing strange at all. But—on an Essex farm! Anyhow, there I found them; and that night a crew of pirates, plus a captive Chinaman, sat down to a most tumultuous feast, and barbecued their meat before the great hall fire. Mr. Van Ping would *not* make up, but I had a splendid crimson sash and a real cutlass, dredged at some distant time from out the moat, where I think some smuggler in a hurry must have cast it. And here I wish to say that rump-steaks hung on a string and spun gently before a blaze are perfectly delightful; but all the same it astonished me to find this method of cookery still in vogue in England.

The feast completed, our captive women sang and danced before us, and the Lady with the Wonderful Voice intoned, from the dimness of the gallery, words that Masfield has set down concerning ships and the sea, and the men who sail upon it, until I found a lump in my throat that badly needed swallowing. It was a night for a sailor unused to pleasant nights to store up in his memory; and so, at last, with the thought of these things stirring in my mind, I limped, tired but very happy, to bed. I limped, because the Lady who Dances had bandaged my piratical leg and painted on it, with a stick of lip-salve, a terrible wound; so, of course I *had* to limp.

Next morning the light awoke me, and looking forth from my window across the marshes, I saw a

red-brown sail glide, stately, through the fields. A sail and spar, sustained upon no hull that I could see, sliding across meadows remote from any sea, was a mystery that intrigued me; but I was not surprised, for I remembered in time that this was England, where anything may happen; so I went downstairs (solid oak, without a creak in them) to breakfast.

Then the Lady who Dances, the gentleman from Peking, and I set out to solve the riddle of that wandering casual sail. We walked on spongy earth that squirted mud at every footstep, through lush grasses, and amongst plovers who mobbed us. I do not know why, but perhaps, being English birds, they disliked our Chinaman. I relate facts merely, and I do not attempt to account for the extraordinary things that happened to me that day. In any case, if you are English, presumably you will understand, without the help of any theories advanced by a bewildered stranger in your fantastic land.

We fled to escape the infuriated lapwings, until suddenly brought up by something that opened at our feet and yawned at us. It was a thing that, in any reasonable country, I should have called a spruit, nullah, or donga; but this affair, though blood-brother to all three, had sloping banks composed of the mud-diast mud I have ever seen anywhere. The colour of the thing was a greasy zinc, and I thought of West Coast fever creeks, and sniffed and looked around for crocodiles—and listened. But there seemed to be no

mosquitoes, so we proceeded, cautiously, downstream—the very twistiest stream in all the world, I think.

I become acclimatised rapidly, I suppose, for I was not much surprised when we came upon the yacht. Rounding the thousandth bend of that incredible ditch, dyke, or drain, a thing I had supposed to be a post upon the bank transformed itself into the mast-head of a small black cutter, lying afloat in a scanty trickle of dirty water at the bottom of that absurd fissure of mud. It was as though one had surprised a rakish brig roosting at the bottom of a hole in the sands of the Sahara. But I kept myself in hand, and, after a little while, I hailed her, when a face arose through her cabin hatch and smiled at us. It was a smile of welcome and goodwill, without a trace of wonder or derision in it. Which was really surprising. For we three pilgrims, materialising suddenly from nowhere, must have looked, to say the least, odd. The Lady who Dances wore a blood-red 'kerchief bound about her lovely head, a sweater green as young willow shoots in spring, and a pair of beautiful indigo-blue riding-breeches. The Gent from Peking conveys, at first sight, the impression that he is a kind of toy lion. He has a really splendid mane, and a tail for all the world like a yellow chrysanthemum, and he holds this up in the air when pleased, which he was then. His eyes stick out a great deal, and his tummy, owing to the excessive shortness of his legs, was matted with mud. As for me, in whatever raiment I may clothe

myself, I invariably seem to incite strong feelings of scorn and derision in all beholders.

Such were we, but our new friend, instead of calling upon his gods to come down and witness his amazement, merely remarked, " Good morning. Won't you come aboard? " I looked at the Lady, and I could see, from the lights dancing in her eyes, that her soul thirsted to embark immediately upon this adventure. Then I contemplated the twenty feet or so of sloping bottomless mud that lay between her and her heart's desire, and I tried to think of any way to cross it. I gave it up. And then, not for the only time that day, our friend showed us that he was the sort of fellow who cannot be defeated. " Oh, that's all right," cried he. " I'll heave you the end of the dinghy painter, and you can easily haul her up to you. Then you all get in, you know, and shove with an oar a bit, and she'll toboggan down there like winkin'."

We did these things, and it was even as he said, except that the bit of a shove with an oar was quite unneeded. Indeed, I found it necessary to restrain the boat by force from dashing away with her two passengers before I could fling myself aboard. But I managed it—a flying pier-head jump—and then the toboggan started. Have you ever seen an expert flying down the Cresta Run on his stomach with his legs waving in the breeze? Well, that was me; and I even tried to steer with my feet as that dinghy charged madly down the slimy bank, straight as an arrow for her parent's side. I drove my starboard leg down to

the knee in the mud; but it was all useless, for the boat refused to answer her helm, and finished the run by butting the yacht hard, right between wind and water, and fair amidships. There was a "crack" which told unmistakably of something started somewhere, and the Lady who Dances cried out aloud, surprisingly; while I mentioned the nether regions by another name; and the Pekinese gentleman also threw his tongue. But our imperturbable friend remarked, "Well done! You did it beautifully. The dinghy's bent a bit, but she'll do. If I were you I'd hang my leg in the creek and wash it; and then, if you like, we'll go for a little sail."

I was not at all clear how George (for this he assured us was his name) proposed to sail in that contorted drain, but soon I began to understand that there was a lot more in George than met the eye. "We'll have to drop down stern first," said he, "until there's room to turn; so, if you'll heave up the anchor, I'll shove her along with the pole." A sailor obeys an order without asking any questions, so I hove up on the chain; and although there was only a fathom of it to come, the mud it brought up with it was impressive, and it covered the fore-deck completely with a species of slimy globigerinous ooze. "Don't worry about that," said George. "She'll wash it off herself when we get out. Will you push with the spinnaker boom, please? If we don't hurry we're likely to stick on the bar. Then, there we'll be, you know."

Twenty-five years at sea is not the best training for

punting with spinnaker booms through Essex mud. In theory the thing is simple. You plant your pole on the bottom and push the boat along. In practice, you push and the pole sinks deeply into the mud, and your struggles to get it out again pull the boat the wrong way. When striving desperately to push a boat ahead it is exasperating—nay, maddening—to find that the harder you work the more you are urging her in precisely the wrong direction. And when a confounded son of a celestial and yellow lady-dog persists in getting between your legs with the idea that he is assisting you to repel mythical boarders . . . Well, you kick him, hard; and he is most surprised. But this relieves your outraged feelings, and it makes the Lady who Dances laugh—which is always worth while. Then I did what I should have done before. I watched George, and I found him achieving, with easy grace, feats of the most incredible dexterity. His method was to reach out well ahead, drive his pole into the mud, and then pull the boat up to it. It seemed simple enough, and I decided at once to conform to his style. So I, too, reached well ahead with my boom, harpooned the bottom with it, and then pulled hard. And the boom withdrew itself from its hole suddenly, with disgusting sounds as of stomach-pumps functioning furiously. I sat down. I sat down hard. I sat down extremely quickly on Mr. Van Ping. Which was entirely his own fault, for he should not have determined so continuously to infest me. I retired then. I refused to play any more, and George said it was just as well.

There was something about that man I liked. I do still—in spite of all he did to us. He was working hard now with his pole, and I gathered that the question of crossing the approaching bar was troubling him. For the bar was approaching, and speedily; for the strongly running ebb now hurried us steadfastly along between the banks of slime, until these presently spread out on either side and fell away from us, revealing, amazingly—the sea! At least George said it was the sea; and the North Sea, too; but we still have our doubts about it. The colour of the water was very queer for one thing—thick and jaundiced—and there was not enough of it there really for a proper sea. We drifted out from the shore a mile or more before I ventured to congratulate George on his successful passage of the bar. But, “We’ve not got over it yet,” said he, thrusting his faithful pole overboard. And, lo, it touched bottom at five feet. And this was the sea—the North Sea!

Then, in the midst of that vacant windless stretch of eerie water, our boat, without a stitch of sail upon her, began to list. Gently at first, then direfully, over she heeled, and the still waters slid abruptly into rapid motion and sped, foaming, past our sides. Over we went till the deck was half awash, while against our exposed bilge arose a seething, frothing yellow wave. George, letting go his anchor, appeared to take these miracles with perfect calm; but to the rest of us it seemed as though some giant hand had seized upon our keel and was dragging us, fiercely, broadside on

against the tide. This exciting and impressive performance left us expectant and amazed; but George said we were merely stuck on the bar, and if we didn't roll over we'd do, which struck me as being a most inadequate way of summing up an apparently miraculous and obviously perilous situation.

I think there must have been a hole in that bar, into which we mercifully slid, for suddenly our giant let go his hold, and the boat stood once more upright, riding to her anchor, head on to the rushing tide. George, a lucid soul, remarked, "Well, here we are," an accurate observation; for there we certainly were, and there we remained for six portentous and unforgettable hours, chock-full—all of them—with interest and excitement.

We watched the waters dwindle and recede, to depart at last beyond our horizon, leaving us desolate and encompassed by a very ocean of mud. We leant our elbows on the rail and gazed at those sleek leagues of circumambient mire, until a tinge of sadness begat by the cheerless scene began to steal upon us. And then, upon our nostrils, too, there stole faint whiffs and savours as of fish, long dead; and from the well arose a sound of snorts and growls and scrapings.

The fight broke out with a crash of upset pails, and we hastened aft in time to see the memorable battle of the Pekinese Dog and the Bucket of Slipper-Limpets. The struggle raged, appropriately enough, on the cockpit floor, and there we found the Gent from China holding his own fairly easily, the short, sharp, fiery

dash with which the limpets had opened their campaign having apparently completely exhausted them. Also, it is only fair to add that though they held a decided advantage in numbers, the limpets were sadly handicapped by lack of condition. They were clearly not in training. In fact, it soon became clear to me that the members of that devoted band not already dying or dead were all very far gone indeed with some sort of badly wasting sickness. The Slipper-Limpets had evidently been lying quietly in their bucket, at peace with the world, when the Chinaman unprovokedly attacked them. The heroic band, with a magnificent effort, the bravery of which compels our admiration, had arisen as one limpet and hurled themselves upon the head of their enemy, only to fall at last fainting on the battlefield. But mark the heights to which a slipper-limpet rises. Swooning, dying, and dead they lay, trampled on, bitten and chewed by their ferocious and barbaric enemy. But in this desperate and hopeless situation do they hoist the white flag, hold up their hands, and cry "Kamerad"? No, a thousand times no! For the true slipper-limpet remains unconquerable—even in death. Down their serried ranks they passed the awful word, "Launch the gas attack!" And they did. . . .

We left that place in a hurry, and the dinghy, pushing her through the mud to wind'ard with the oars. Mr. Van Ping we also left upon the stricken field. He howled despairingly, but we did not want him. He had been far too intimately associated with

his late adversaries to allow us to love him any more.

"George," said the Lady who Dances, "*why* do you carry those horrible things about with you? Are they pets, and are you attached to them? Don't say you eat them!"

"No," said George, "they're bait. They eat oysters, you know, but the dabs like 'em. I'd forgotten about that lot, and they must have been in the bucket a fortnight. Harmless little chaps if you don't rouse them. But, by Jingo, *when* you do! We will now wait here a bit till the whiff's eased off, then I'll go back and clean up, and we'll have some lunch."

When the time was ripe we proceeded hopefully to urge the reluctant dinghy back across the mud. But it was not to be, for she bedded herself down comfortably in her wallow, and, nestling there cosily, she now refused to budge. George then rashly jumped out to push, and sank to past his middle in the ooze; and when I followed him to help, all of me below my third waistcoat button was immediately swallowed up.

Mr. Van Ping, marooned upon the yacht with only the spirits of departed slipper-limpets to keep him company, gave tongue lugubriously. I looked at George, and I think my face was white, and I know I was sweating coldly, for the fear of a very dreadful death had arisen in my heart. George for once had discovered an adversary in whose face he could not smile, and I have reason to believe that icy sweats were

afflicting him also. But, "Well, here we are," said he, clinging, it seemed to me, with misplaced affection to an overworked phrase; but it showed his heart was in the right place, and this did me good, for by now my last waistcoat button was disappearing.

Then the Lady who Dances began to take an active part in the affair. Without a word she handed out the oars, and whilst with these we tried to impede our lingering burial, she took the dinghy's bottom boards, and planting these unsteady stepping-stones before her as she went, she passed, dainty and sure, across the shuddering surface of the quick-sand. The rapturous nature of Mr. Van Ping's welcome was as nothing to the glad fervour with which we greeted the end of the main sheet that presently smacked the mud into our faces. Grabbing it we pulled hard, only to find we were by then so well and truly planted that it was impossible to exhume ourselves.

But George, as ever, rose even to this occasion. "Take your end forward to the windlass and heave on it," cried he. "And you, pass me your oar and make the line fast under your arms. And if I were you I'd throw a bowline or you're likely to regret it." These things being accomplished, the Lady hove away, the rope taughtened, and I, strangled and kicking, drew out at last from that reluctant mud. By the time I reached the yacht there was not very much of George above the surface, and what there was of him was sinking visibly by the stern. But we salvaged him in time, and being thin, he uncorked easily enough.

We drew him alongside, and his words when he touched the deck one more were, under the circumstances, impressive. "Wash and brush-up. Then grub, I think," said he.

The wash and brush-up was not a success at all, but the grub when it came was entirely amazing. Crouching in that tiny cabin, we watched with awe while George performed miracles upon two Primus stoves. From somewhere, apparently the bilge, he drew forth steaks, which presently, sizzling in olive oil, he anointed with strange and pungent condiments. Onions he produced from dark and mysterious holes, and potatoes also, to be fried cunningly beneath the meat. Coffee boiled in a black and battered pan sounds most unpromising, but, with George presiding at the brew, a fresh and fragrant beverage somehow results. Then I learned, in succession, how toast can be made—to perfection, too—upon a blow-lamp; how beer, in a frying-pan, may be sweetly mulled; and of the divine virtue that may be extracted by an expert from a mere tin of pork and beans. I found out, too, how all these operations, and others besides, may be so synchronised as to achieve in due time that most desirable affair—the perfect meal.

"Dee-licious," said the Lady who Dances, gazing at her empty plates. "I didn't think it could be done. George, you are a wonder, and I feel myself beginning to love you." And I, replete, leant back upon the cushions and agreed with her.

"Being no sea-water within miles," said George,

"we can't wash-up; so we'll sit and smoke and wait till she floats."

For the next two hours we sat, in the diminutive but adequately appointed hole which George calls his cabin, well-fed, warm, and cosy, while George held forth enlighteningly upon the peculiar difficulties and quaint hazards which beset all navigators adventuring on the besmirched and tide-tormented waters of the Thames estuary. By tea-time a rising wind was whistling through our rigging, with those low mournful pipings which I have found to be a sure prelude to a spell of dirty weather out of the south-west. Across a sky, gloomy and overcast, the scud was even then commencing to hurry, and a line of heaving whiteness across the mud-flats marked the returning of the waters.

"Do you get much sea on these banks of yours with a hard sou'-westerly wind, George?"

"Oh, heavy enough to break us up—if the bottom's hard," said George. "But, as you know, it isn't. No. That's not troubling me, and I don't care where I go, of course; but this is a dead head wind for you people, and in a joggle the old boat will *not* go to wind'ard."

"That's nice," said I. "Then what's the evolution?"

"Hang on to our anchor, I think, till there's water enough to float us right over the bar, and then run for Harwich."

"Harwich!" exclaimed the Lady.

"I'm afraid so," said George. "It's not far, though. Down the coast, and take the first turning

on the left. I haven't a chart, but I can make it all right. But I'm afraid you'll be out all night."

"Can't be done, George," said I. "We've got to get this child home to her little cot to-night. You're a man of resource. How do we do it?"

"Oh, in that case, then Clacton's the only place. I'll take a chance and try and land you on the pier there, and you might get hold of a car to take you home."

"Right, George!" said I. "Clacton let it be."

Our destination thus decided on, there remained only the question whether the Fates would allow us to reach it; and upon this point I had my own grave doubts. It's true the wind was fair, but there seemed to me to be far too much of it, and it was raising a sea by now that promised to jolt us to pieces before we floated clear of the ground. The bottom was soft enough, no doubt, and a sound strong boat would not suffer much from pounding on it. But our boat was neither strong nor sound, and the marks of a very great age were visible upon her.

We waited.

The angry line of breaking waves moved steadily on across the dismal flats, seeming to close on us in menace. Those hurrying waters, reaching us at last, washed high about our sides, and soon each wave that passed us by began to lift us, and let us fall again upon a bottom manifestly changed to stone. The seas grew higher as the water rose, and I waited for our bruised hull to split and fall to pieces under the brutal pounding.

"If she doesn't hit a hard patch or slam the heel

of her mast through the bottom, she'll do," said George contentedly. And the boat continuing indomitably to endure her punishment, I ventured to suppose she had been specially constructed for this work. But George assured me cheerfully that such was far from being the case. "Oh, no," said he. "Before I bought her and decked her in she was a Clacton beach boat. You know. Carting a gang of trippers round at a bob a head. Regular old shilling-vomiter she was, in fact."

"Ah, I see," said I. "And she seems to be taking again to her former habits. If I am not mistaken Mr. Van Ping already owes you three shillings; and I feel that if this bumping goes on much longer I shall be in your debt too."

"Do it well over the side, then, and we won't insist on our bob," said George, looking at the Lady who Dances, who was palpably scared, but just as palpably determined not to show it. "I believe," said he then, "if we put sail on her now she might drive over the bar. We'll try it anyhow, as things will be quieter if we get her under way."

With that he set about getting his cockleshell ready for sea in true deep-water style, and as master, mate, and crew in turn, he gave and carried out his orders. "Man the windlass," he roared. "And send a hand aft to the wheel. Anchor's away, sir. Then stand by your fore-topmast-staysail halliards. Leave the anchor hanging at the cat-heads and hoist away on that sail. Put up your helm and—damn it, the peak halliards

have got away from me." These cheery sounds, floating to us aft out of the darkness, made our Lady laugh again, which all the time had been precisely George's laudable intention. Observing this, and knowing, too, how action tends to banish apprehension, I gave the Lady the tiller, together with instructions, and then I crawled forward, to find George wrapped in a Laocöon-like coil of halliards.

I suppose I have set some hundreds of mainsails in my time, and George must have hoisted that one particular sail hundreds of times too. Yet this time George's mainsail nearly defeated us both. It refused to go up, while all we two able seamen seemed able to do was to fall, heavily and repeatedly, down. The fore-deck was coated with wet and slippery mud, it was listed at an acute angle, and regularly every two seconds the whole boat shook with a shuddering jar that made any sort of foothold impossible. Why say more? The wonder is that we ever set that sail at all. But we did, and while we were doing it, oblivious to everything else in the world except the ultimate setting of that confounded sail, the boat must have somehow bumped and slid and wrenched herself over the bar; for we found, when at last we straightened our aching backs and looked around, that she was afloat again, and sailing.

Then we became aware of cries arising from aft. "Oh, which way shall I push the stick. Which way? Which way?" It was the Lady in trouble with the steering, and, from the note of agony in her voice,

she must have been in trouble for some time. "Look out! You'll jibe. Put down your helm," we helpfully cried. "Which way? Which way?" the anguished answer came, and with it the crash and jerk and racket of a most healthy and full-blooded jibe.

"Relieve the wheel," said George, "and keep her before the wind till I get a light in the binnacle and see where we're running to."

I steered the boat, it seemed for hours, while she rushed blindly through a night mysterious, wild, and darker than the shades. "Keep your eye skinned," called George, wrestling still with matches in the cabin. "We don't want to knock a hole in any of the banks around here, and there are dozens of 'em, you know." As this perturbing piece of news was being imparted, I felt the Lady who Dances start. "There's something *there*," she cried. "Look! Right in front of us. A low black line. What can it be?"

"Then jibe her, quick!" said George, most suddenly appearing. "It's lucky our Lady can see in the dark, for that's the beach. I haven't a chart, and, anyhow, there's no oil in the lamp; so we'll keep her running along in sight of the shore, and in time we ought to connect with Clacton pier. I think there's lots of water."

The cheerful and casual methods adopted by George, when navigating in those difficult and tide-ridden waters so afflicted by shoals, impressed me. They were sketchy, perhaps, but most surprisingly adequate, for presently a strange enormous shape

loomed in the black above us, and, "Pavilion on the pier," said George. "Bear up or you'll hit it." We had arrived!

Anchoring in the pier's inadequate lee, we drew the dinghy alongside and looked at it. She was small—very small—and very full of water; but George opined that she would take us all "if you bail hard with the bucket". So we embarked, reluctantly, especially the Gent from Peking, who, though strongly reminiscent still of slipper-limpets, simply had to be carried. I know not how we reached the pier; I was far too busy bailing, and the credit is due to George alone for performing this final miracle. Banging and slithering amid encrusted piles we felt, by hand, for a landing-place, which even the Lady who sees in the Dark could not make out in that Cimmerian darkness. Mr. Van Ping it was who finally showed us the way, for suddenly he sprang wildly out into the night, and we heard him then shaking himself exuberantly upon some platform invisible above us.

"Well, there you are," said George. "Safe ashore again. I'm sorry you feel you have got to go, but some day soon I hope you'll come for another little sail. I'll get back now and shove off for Harwich. Good-bye, you three. I'm awfully glad we met."

And then George disappeared into the night. That was the last we saw of him, and we've never heard of him since. But one thing I am sure of, and that is that he fetched Harwich. I feel that if George made up his mind to it he could fetch Melbourne, say, in

a small canoe. And what is more, he would be certain to enjoy his little sail.

In February, it seems, to judge from its forlorn and desolate pier, Clacton is out of season; and later, whilst traversing the town in search of suitable wheeled transport, we felt very glad of this fact, for even a native population inured to the sartorial peculiarities of week-end trippers proved able only to regard us with feelings of startled amazement, coupled with a glib derision which was very embarrassing indeed. Even the ancient, and therefore presumably experienced, Jehu of a battered car, as weathered as himself, could scarcely be induced to regard us as possible fares, and it was necessary to make it very clear that the adventure would prove to him most lucrative before he would permit us to embark on his rattling "randrydan".

"Wickilywick, you say. Yes, down in the marsh. I know it. I'll risk it—for two quid. But you'll *ruin* my cushions. 'Ere, sit on this nose-bag. And hold the dog on your lap *all* the way, mind, for 'e smells 'orrid. Fish, ain't it?"

And so at length we departed, rattling Wickilywickwards through the night, disturbing as we went, with our outrageous clamour, sleeping suburban Clactonites, blackbirds roosting in hedgey lanes, and mournful lapwings hiding in the marsh.

"I'm cold and I'm wet and very, very dirty. I've a bruise on all my corners, and I'm tired out. But somehow," said the Lady who Dances, "I'm happy. We've had a good day to-day, I think, don't you?"

"Perfect," said I. "I didn't know it could be done—in Essex. I've moved about the world a bit, and I've had some good days too; but there's a strange quaint flavour about this one that I've never met before. I'm not thinking of the limpets either."

And Mr. Van Ping seemed to agree with us, for just then he sat up and wagged his feathered tail.

Said I, "I only hope they aren't all worried to death about us. It's after one o'clock, and they'll be wondering what's happened. Search parties out all over the marsh, and the police called in, I expect."

Said the Lady, as we at last approached the farm, "They don't *seem* very excited. The house is all dark! I believe the callous beasts have calmly gone to bed."

They had, and our host alone arose to greet us. Awakened doubtless by the tumultuous whirring of our gears, he called from his bedroom window, "I say, did you take Van Ping? Ah! good. He's there. I was afraid he'd lost himself. The side door's open, children, and you'll find a cold duck and a ham and things in the hall. But I'm freezing. Good-night, and God bless you."

When I got to bed at last I lay awake a little while thinking about things. "It's the queerest country in all the world," I thought, "with the very quaintest people. Yes. All these years I've been wasting my time; but I'm home again at last—and I mean to stay here."

And as I fell most peacefully asleep I whispered to myself, "*Dear England*".

By
WESTON MARTYR



BOWMAN'S GLORY

THE General began this thing. He said he had a literary curiosity I ought to read and he lent me Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus*, an intriguing technical treatise on shooting with the longbow, written in Elizabethan English.

It is intriguing, all right! To read *Toxophilus* with understanding means that one drops everything and takes up the bow. I read *Toxophilus* and dropped the love of my life, which was yachting. I sold my yacht and bought a bow and arrows. And I passed on Roger's insidious work to the Colonel, who is a plus-two golfer. And the Colonel resigned from his golf club and sold his golf clubs and now counts every second lost which is not employed in loosing a shaft from his bow.

So you see.

I admit, grudgingly, that the General has some small claim to be the man who reintroduced the bow to Fendham. If he had not lent me that copy of *Toxophilus* I should not have got me a bow. I make that generous concession; but I hasten to add that it was I who sped the first shaft to be loosed from a bow in

this village since the day some fool introduced guns and powder. I did shoot the first arrow. And this is important, because I maintain and can prove that, if archery had not been revived in this village of Fendham, the British Empire would be smaller to-day than it is.

I shot my first arrow at a haystack. The range was threescore paces, and I missed the haystack and lost my arrow in the long grass. I shot eleven more arrows at the haystack and hit it ten times.

I was amazed. I was proud. Also I was enchanted. The music of the bow and the lovely flight of the hissing arrows. The grace. The beauty. It moved me as though I heard some splendid song. It did my business for me. I realised then that all my life, up to the moment I loosed my first arrow, had been completely wasted.

The Colonel called in after lunch. He said: "I was reading old Ascham last night, and this morning I remembered Agnes' grandfather was an archer and she inherited all his old junk. So I poked about in the attics, and sure enough, his stuff was there! There were four bows, and bracers, quivers, bowstrings and finger tabs—all sorts of stuff. You never saw such luck! And dozens of arrows. Some of 'em are broken and the feathers moth-eaten, but I found a few that were sound. And what d'you think? I strung a bow and braced it, all according to Ascham's instructions—although I'm not sure what he means by a fistmele, are you? Anyhow, I put a deck chair on the lawn at fifty paces, and let drive. And you never saw anything

like it! That arrow went miles. Simply *miles*! Right over the stables and into the cucumber frames. Saxton saw it. He was working on the cucumbers, and the arrow smashed a frame, and he thought a shell had burst. Anyway, I paced it out and it's over two hundred yards. Think of it! With practice I'm certain I could shoot an arrow a darned sight farther than I can hit a golf ball. And you know, I actually hit that deck chair at the fifth shot. I did. I hit it. The arrow knocked it endways and went clean through. I've been shooting all the morning and I tell you archery's *the* goods. Golf's a fool to it. I'm going to take this thing up seriously, and that's why I've come to see you. We've got to form a club and hire a field and buy some targets. I've shot that deck chair to rags. Pretty good shootin'—for a beginner, what? ”

“ I'm not too bad myself,” said I, and I told him how I had mutilated that haystack. I said: “ A club's a good idea. What shall we call ourselves? The Fendham Archers? ”

“ Fendham Bowmen sounds better,” opined the Colonel.

“ If you two want a purely descriptive title,” remarked Herself, “ what about the Fendham Boasters? ”

It will interest future historians to learn that the Fendham Archers first set up their targets in Fendham Home Park. It was an ideal site, sheltered from all winds by the General's giant beeches, while his

many nimble rabbits kept the grass cut beautifully close. The Colonel sited the targets and measured the ranges, because he is a colonel of Royal Engineers, and the control of theodolites and surveying chains is not my forte. But I, as the only other member of our club at that time, did venture to make a protest against placing the targets so close to the public footpath.

I said, "This is a public right of way, Colonel. The whole village uses it".

The Colonel said, "I know; but if we want to spread the light and get people interested, we've got to let 'em see us shoot."

I said, "Yes. But supposing we shoot somebody?" And the Colonel said, "Oh, that's all right. I've looked up the point. There's a statute of Henry VIII, or somebody, which has never been repealed. It's still law, and it says if an archer shouts 'Fast' three times and then shoots a bystander, it's the bystander's fault. Now everything's ready, so let's start. I propose we celebrate the inaugural meet of the Fendham Archers by all members present shooting a York Round".

A York Round consists of shooting six dozen arrows at 100 yards, four dozen at eighty yards, and two dozen at sixty, and the "bogey" score for the whole round is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 500. At 100 yards the Colonel hit the target twice. He fluked a central "gold", which scores nine, and an outside "white", which scores one. I did not score anything, but I did hit a target leg and break an

arrow. At eighty yards the Colonel achieved three hits and scored eleven. But I lost my form completely and missed even the target legs. At sixty yards, though, I came into my own and shot so magnificently that the Colonel got rattled and scored a duck. I only missed eighteen times and scored a grand total of twenty-two. I am proud to think that my name accordingly, goes down to fame as the Fendham Archers' first champion.

When I got home I boasted of my prowess. Said Herself, "You funny old thing, playing at bows and arrows at your age".

The Colonel's wife was even more brutal to him. She said, "Bows and arrows! You must be getting into your dotage. If you persist in playing such a childish game, you'll have the whole village laughing at you".

Mrs. Colonel was right, too. The whole village did laugh. The small girls sneered, the small boys jeered, and their elders took no pains to conceal their opinion that the Colonel and I were a couple of childish old fools.

"I overheard Saxton opine," said the Colonel, "that you and I will start playing marbles next, or peg-tops."

"And I hear the doctor's considered opinion is," said I, "that, though archery may once have been a fashionable pastime for ladies, in these days it is inconsistent with the dignity of a gentleman and a sportsman to play at bows and arrows. It can't be expected, of course, that a writing fellow from London,

like me, should know any better; but one would think that a gentleman holding His Majesty's commission—and so on. In fact, we're a couple of doddering idiots, Colonel. It's funny."

"It beats me," replied the Colonel. "Why, hang it all, archery's the most ancient sport in the world and it ought to be the most honoured—especially in England. And it certainly is the most interesting and fascinating thing I've ever tried my hand at. Dash my eyes! It's far harder to loose a straight arrow than it is to hit a straight drive. Yet they make you think you're a national figure if you're a plus-two golfer. But if you loose a straight arrow they call you a decrepit old fool."

"Not so decrepit," I said. "D'you know what work you do when you shoot a Double York Round? I've been working it out. You lift six tons and walk over five miles."

"Good," said the Colonel. "Let's totter up to the park and lift three tons before lunch."

At the end of a month's practice the Fendham Archers had learned a number of things about bows and arrows and the human mind. This sailor, for instance, has always believed that, of all things fashioned by the brains and hands of man, a sailing vessel is the thing which man has most nearly succeeded in endowing with life. All ships have strongly marked individualities; all seamen know ships with wills of their own and with good or evil tempers. And I have

known ships that could talk. But when this sailor became an archer, he discovered to his great surprise that a ship is merely a dull, inanimate lump of stuff when compared with a self-yew longbow. Yes; ships may talk, but my longbow can sing!

The yew bow whose friendship I am privileged to possess was created by a master of the bowyers' art a long time before I was born. It is a Stradivarius of a bow. It is a long bow and a strong bow of character, with a highly developed artistic temperament. If it feels sympathetic toward you and you handle it with understanding, it will shoot as straight as any rifle and cast an arrow twelvescore yards and more. But if you try to shoot with it when it is out of temper, or if your personality is distasteful to it, look out! It is bad enough if it merely turns sulky and refuses to put forth its strength; but if it is really out of sorts, as like as not, when you loose its quivering string, it will tear the skin off your forearm.

The Colonel began with a light, lancewood bow and practised sedulously until he mastered it. At the end of two weeks he scored fifty-six with a dozen arrows at sixty yards, which is goodish shooting. Joe Noble saw him do it.

Joe is the Bad Man of our village. He toils not, neither does he spin. He poaches. The General says Joe makes his living out of his pheasants. Joe was also, on one occasion, a thief. The occasion was his demobilisation, when he stole an Army rifle. He has shown me the rifle. It had forty-two notches cut in

its stock, and Joe explained them by stating, "I always could hit what I aimed at, since I was a little boy throwing stones. So they made me a Corpse sniper, an' I plugs forty-two Jerries, poor chaps. This big nock was a Fritz brass hat at 300 yards. So I reckoned I'd earned the old piece, and I took her apart and smuggled her home down my trousers. Yers".

Joe was watching from the footpath when the Colonel made his fine score. I said, "You ought to try your hand at this, Joe. I should think a bow's just the weapon for your trade. It's silent".

Joe had been looking rather scornful, but the idea struck him and his face changed. "By gum!" said he. "So it is an' all."

We gave him the Colonel's bow and showed him how to stand and draw. We did not tell him how to loose, because, before we could do so, Joe loosed of his own accord. And his loose was so smooth and clean that his arrow sped over the target and landed a hundred yards beyond.

"Oh, lovely!" he murmured, with a faraway look in his eyes. "Lemme see. It ought to be easy. The point of the arrow's a foresight, but all you've got for a backsight's the string. Line 'em up and you've got your direction. But how d'you get your elevation? You can't see how much the butt of the arrow's below your eye. But, hold on! You can *feel* that. Yers. Here! Gimme another arrow."

Joe's second arrow was absolutely straight, but just short of the target. "Oh, lovely!" said he again.

"Beautiful." His eyes shone and he took deep breaths. "Here," he cried. "Another arrow, quick!"

I gave him one, quick, because there was an inspired look on Joe's face just then which impressed me. I know, now, I was looking at a natural-born marksman discovering he was a natural-born archer and becoming intoxicated with delight. And, at the time, I thought it might be beer, heaven forgive me!

Joe's third shaft pierced the inner red. And after that he went on hitting the target until the light went.

Let it go on record that Joseph Noble was the third member to join the Fendham Archers. The Colonel proposed and I seconded him, and he was elected unanimously.

The next day the Fendham Archers were engrossed in a Hereford Round when the General appeared. He said, "Hello! What are you doing here, Joe Noble? I said you fellows were welcome to shoot in the park, but I didn't realise I was giving the freedom of the place to a demnition poacher, what?"

It was an awkward situation. The General is a benevolent autocrat. But he is an autocrat. And his pheasants are the apple of his eye.

Said the Colonel, "Dash it all, General, don't turn Joe off. He's a crack shot".

"I know it," said the General. "He's sudden death—to sitters, in moonlight—with a sawed-off gun and a reduced charge. Humph."

"He was pretty deadly with a rifle, too—once," I interjected tentatively.

"Joe's a phenomenon," said the Colonel. "It's extraordinary. He seems to be a natural archer. Hanged if I can understand it, but he can't miss. It's like putting a brassie into the hands of somebody who's never heard of golf, and watching him hit screamer after screamer plumb down the fairway."

"It's uncanny, but it's true," I said. "Joe's a potential Champion of England, or I'll eat my hat."

"Show him what you can do, Joe," said the Colonel. "Shoot an end at eighty yards."

Joe loosed three arrows and hit the target thrice.

"By Jove! That looks easy," said the General. "Let me try a shot."

Joe nocked an arrow on the string and handed over his bow to the General. The General is a powerful man and he drew and loosed entirely by the light of nature. And the arrow glinted once in the sun, high above the tops of the surrounding beeches, and vanished.

"Good Gad!" exclaimed the General. "That felt wonderful. I didn't know I could make it go so far, so easily. Here! Give me another arrow."

"The range is only eighty yards," said Joe. "You sighted that last one for about 300. And you mustn't throw up your bow arm like that, either. And whatever you do, don't pull your loose. It's just the same as the trigger of a rifle. You've got to squeeze, not jerk. Only, with a bow, you *un*-squeeze, like. Here! I'll show you."

When the Colonel and I left in the twilight, Joe

was still showing the General. And next morning we got to the butts to find the General there already, impatiently waiting.

I seem to remember it was about this period that there came a change in the atmosphere of our village. The air, for one thing, became thick with home-made arrows loosed from home-made bows by wanton boys. And I ceased to observe the curious phenomenon of a sudden drop in temperature which had previously marked the passage of an archer along our village street. The change may have been in some part due to the fact that two such far-famed sportsmen as Joe Noble and the General had actually abandoned their guns for the bow. But there were other factors.

There is a mysterious something about archery which you sense as soon as your first well-loosed arrow flies to the mark. It is a feeling which no other sport can give. It is well to remark, here, that archery is no mere game, invented by man to amuse himself with. The bow is not a sporting tool, like a golf club. The bow is a weapon—the weapon which first gave man his mastery over the beasts. A club may be a weapon too; but when all a man had in his hand was a club, he had to run and hide or climb a tree whenever he heard the sabre-tooth tiger roar. But when man invented the bow, he increased the strength of his arm ten times and the reach of his arm a hundred times—and then it was the tiger's turn to run and hide. Thanks to the bow, man ceased to be mere

hunted vermin. Thanks to the bow, he stood up on his two feet and stuck his chest out and felt himself, for the first time, lord of all creation. And now, when you loose an arrow, you seem to be doing something you ought to be doing, something which it gives you great pleasure to do. And I can only suppose this feeling is due to the fact that some of the pride inherited from a prehistoric archer ancestor comes through from your subconscious memory and makes you feel good.

This is the only way I can account for the unique pleasure one derives from shooting with the bow. But this theory may seem far-fetched, so let me deal with cold facts and official figures. Fendham contains thirty-two males between the ages of sixteen and sixty. Of these, thirty either sneered or laughed heartily when the Colonel and I formed the Fendham Archery Club. That was eighteen months ago. There are now thirty keen archers in Fendham, and there would be thirty-two if Ephraim Beard had not lost both hands while on a walking tour in 1916 in the Somme Valley and if our padre was not a victim of gout.

When the Young General flew home on leave from Central Africa and found the Old General shooting arrows in the home paddock, he said, "Well, I'll be hanged! This is funny, dad".

The Old General said, "Shush! Never talk to an archer when he's shooting". He loosed his arrow and hit the target with a thud. "Two o'clock, red," he

observed. "Not so bad at 100 yards. I advise you to try and shoot like that before you laugh at archery, Robert."

"Sorry, dad," the Young General replied. "But it's funny. For the last three years I've been wearing myself thin, striving to root out, eradicate, and totally abolish the bow and arrow from my province, and I come home to the ancestral acres for a well-earned rest and change and I find you—you—shooting arrows all over the park. It *is* funny."

"What are you trying to abolish the bow for?"

"Because it's a menace," replied the Young General. "It's such a serious menace that, if I can't abolish it, I think we'll have to clear out of the province, for good."

"D'you mean abandon it!" exclaimed the Old General. "Are you joking, Robert? Hang it all, it's a Protectorate. We *can't* run away."

"We can back out, though," answered the Young General. "The Word has gone forth from Whitehall. I've had my warning. Law and order must be maintained, at all costs. But not if it's going to cost any money, as the place isn't worth spending money on, so I am informed. Seems a bit contradictory to me, but They're quite pleased with their dictum. So it all boils down to this. If I can't persuade old Umchaka to make his men stop shooting poisoned arrows at strangers, at sight, then we, being the strangers, will withdraw, leaving Umchaka to stew in his own juice. Which is precisely what Umchaka wants, so it looks

as though your son would soon be out of a job, sir."

The Old General snorted. "What form of persuasion are you going to employ? Machine guns?"

The Young General answered "No" with great decision. "The force at my disposal," said he, "is a Liverpool-Irish subaltern with a Vickers gun, and fifty Nubians who can drill like the Guards but can't shoot for toffee. The country's all solid bush and the average range of visibility is ten yards. And if I took my little lot in there with intent to rub Umchaka's nose in it, we'd all get stuck full of arrows and swell up slowly and die. You never see Umchaka's bowmen, dad, and they shoot awful straight at short ranges. Machine guns only make them laugh. No. Diplomacy's the word. I'll have to diddle the old boy—somehow."

The Colonel turned up just then with a piece of news which interested us far more than the Young General's provincial chatter. The Colonel said, "By Jove! I've just been shooting a Single York with Joe Noble and he actually scored four hundred and eighty-two. You never saw such shooting".

The Old General said, "Phew! Well done, Joe. Why, that's championship form. If he can keep that up through a Double York . . . Let's see. Twice two are four. Twice eight . . . Gad! It's almost a thousand! Well *done*, Joe".

I said, "If they don't look out, the Champion of England is going to be a Fendham Archer. I vote we

pass round the hat and enter Joe for the English Championship Meeting and let him put the Fendham Archers on the map”.

We did enter Joe Noble for the National Championship Archery Meeting. Joe, at practice, was shooting as straight as Cupid himself, and it seemed as certain as anything can be that he would shed everlasting glory on the Fendham Archers by making himself Champion of England.

Alas for our dreams! Fate had other things in store for Joe. Two weeks before the National Meeting the Young General's leave expired, and he, confound him, shanghaied our potential champion. Said the Young General, “ I'm sorry, you fellows. I haven't said anything so far, because I didn't know if I could wangle it. But I need Joe. I've asked him to come out to Africa with me, and he's willing and we sail next week”.

We protested violently; but the Young General only grinned. Said the Colonel, “ I know you think archery's a joke, Bob. You've been pulling our legs about it ever since you got home. But you know very well how keen we are to see Joe win the championship; and then, at almost the last moment, you spring this on us. If it's your idea of a joke, I don't think much of your taste”.

I said, “ What d'you think you're doing, Robert? You don't suppose you're doing Joe a good turn, getting him a job, do you? I know Joe, and I tell you he doesn't want a job. He's all right, but it isn't in

him to stick to any regular work. He's not that kind of man. He's quite happy as he is, doing odd jobs when he feels like it and poaching for fun. If you try to pin a man like Joe down to regular hours and discipline, he'll fail you. I expect he's dazzled at the thought of going to Africa; but I warn you, when he gets there and the novelty wears off, he'll go to pieces. You may think you're doing him a good turn, but you're really doing him a bad one. You're robbing him of his chance to be Champion of England. Laugh, if you like, Robert; but, if Joe were champion, it would give him a sense of responsibility and ballast that he's never had yet, and it might be the making of him".

But the Young General continued to grin. So I gave him up.

I do not know what the Old General said to his son; but I know what he said to Joe. He offered Joe the position of head gamekeeper, and Joe turned him down, flat. Said Joe, "No, no, General. I've signed up with the Young General; and what would *you* think of a man who did your son dirty and went back on him?"

The Old General apologised to Joe. He apologised to the Young General too. He said, "I've been trying to steal Joe Noble away from you, Robert, behind your back. I tried bribery and corruption, and Joe, very properly, rebuked me. He's all right. You've got a good man there, my son. But I'd like to know what you think you're going to do with him".

But the Young General is not the sort to scatter information, unless he wants to. "Joe's down on the strength as my personal attendant," he said. "But that's eyewash, dad. I've got a real job of work for Joe."

It is the custom of the Fendham Archers to meet on Saturday afternoons and hold a competition. The ladies shoot a National Round and the men a Single York. At five o'clock we are all quite ready for our tea, which we take in the Hall at a long table, over which Mrs. General hospitably presides. It was during our tea, some months after the Young General and Joe Noble had vanished into Africa, that the Old General arose, with some papers in his hand, and spoke as follows:

"Brother Archers—I am going to read you a letter which has just come from my son, Robert, in Africa. It contains some news which, I know, will interest you. He says . . . Hum, where is it? Here we are. 'You will remember I told you our position in the province was, to say the least, precarious. We are called a British Protectorate, but I was beginning to wonder what that meant. Umchaka and his people were quite able to protect themselves from anyone, including us, thanks to their ability to dart like snakes through the thick bush which covers the whole country. They fought like snakes, too. If a white man ventured into the bush, the odds were he never came out again. He would see nothing, but he would

hear a hiss and feel an arrow strike. Then he'd swell up and turn black and die. So we didn't go into the bush much.

“ ‘ I think I told you, when I was in London, the Voices from on High gave me The Straight Tip. They announced that unless your son made this land safe for democracy, chop, chop, they proposed to pack up and quit. They gave me a free hand to do what I liked—so long as I spent no money and used no force. I was relieved to hear they were sound on the no-force notion, for I'd been living in dread of some ass talking about punitive expeditions. You will understand that, in this practically impenetrable bush-swamp country, even a mechanised division with tanks and aircraft could effect nothing against invisible bowmen, except its own extinction.

“ ‘ That, briefly, was the problem I had to wrestle with when I was home on leave. I didn't solve it, but I did get an idea. It seemed a pretty pathetic idea, but as it was all the idea I had, I played it for all it was worth.

“ ‘ The province is bigger than Wales and much more mountainous, and the whole area is solid with forest. Solid is quite the right word. I call it my province, but it really belongs to Umchaka, who holds the whole place and the lives of everybody in it in the hollow of his hands. And do not imagine Umchaka is a black, ignorant savage. He is light brown, for one thing, and a gentleman and sportsman and a friend of mine. And he has twice my brains.

Fortunately, his knowledge and experience are limited by his environment. He knows all there is to know about his country and his people, but he does not know much else. Which is where I have the bulge on him.

“ ‘ To get down to business. Two months ago I arranged a big *indaba* with Umchaka, and gave him my ultimatum. I said I was tired of his people killing my people, and if he did not stop them, I would have to do it for him. Umchaka laughed and said what I knew he would say. He said, in effect, he wasn't afraid of anything I could do, because, for fighting in the bush, one of his men with a bow and arrows was worth a hundred of mine with guns. So I took him aback by saying I knew all that just as well as he did, which was the reason I was not going to fight him with men who used guns, but with archers who could shoot farther and straighter than his own men could.

“ ‘ That made Umchaka smile politely. I repeat, there are no flies on the downy old bird. He judged I was bluffing, and said if I had such mighty archers he would like to see some. Which was just what I'd been waiting for. I'd got Joe Noble fully primed, of course, and we'd carefully rehearsed the whole show. We'd rigged up a scarecrow to look as much like Umchaka as we knew how, and we stuck it up in front of the old chief, and Joe stood off at eighty yards and shot a dozen arrows clean through it. Joe, good man, never missed once.

“ ‘ That made Umchaka sit up, I can tell you.

He'd believed that no white man could handle what his experience had shown him to be the king of weapons, the bow. Yet here was a white man shooting straighter and farther than he'd ever seen anyone shoot before. His men, you see, shoot only at very short ranges. They can hit a small bird at ten yards, but thirty yards is about their effective limit. So the sight of Joe plugging arrow after arrow into a man-sized target at the impossible range of eighty yards, and never missing, made the old man's eyes stick right out. And when Joe stood off at the simply miraculous range of 100 yards and hit with five arrows out of six, Umchaka took a tug at his hair with both hands and cried "Wow," which being interpreted means, "It's a miracle, and even then I don't believe it".

"Your son then seized the opportunity he had so cleverly created! I told Umchaka he'd be wise to decide to make his men behave, in future, unless he wanted me to do the job for him and send for an army of archers who could all shoot like Joe.

"Umchaka sat there after that and took thought for a good hour. I felt very pleased with myself and my artful diplomacy. I judged I'd got the old boy where I wanted him. So it was a blow when the wily old devil arose at last and called my bluff completely. He said he wasn't afraid of anything my army of archers could do. My men might shoot very straight, but what was the good of that when they would never

catch a glimpse of their enemies? And my men might shoot very far, but no man could shoot far in the forest. He had me there, and he knew it. My big idea had failed.

“ ‘ Then Umchaka began to boast about what *his* men could do; how they could creep up unseen and shoot my men full of holes. And all the rest of it. It was all painfully true, particularly his mimed description of a white man trying to move silently through the forest and making enough noise about it to scare every living creature within miles. It made me blush. And it made Joe Noble angry.

“ ‘ Joe said, “ Ho! If he thinks that’s how *all* white men go about it, I’ll show the old beggar different. I haven’t been poaching all my life and sniping Jerries for three years for nothing”.

“ ‘ Joe then actually begged me to let him take on Umchaka at his own game. What Joe proposed was a sort of duel, with him and one of Umchaka’s men let loose in the bush to stalk each other with their bows and arrows. I put my foot down on that, of course; I didn’t want to see Joe shot with a poisoned arrow. I didn’t think he had a chance against a native in his native bush, and I dare not risk letting an Englishman be publicly put to shame by a native. But Joe persisted. He said we’d been put to shame already. He assured me I need not worry about his ability to move invisibly through cover, because he’d stalked to within touching distance of foxes before then, and he backed a Fendham fox to smell and see

and hear quicker and farther than any man, black, brown, or white. And he said he was ready to use blunt arrows if the other fellow used clean ones.

“ ‘ Umchaka butted in then. He wanted to know what all the talk was about, and I foolishly told him. He jumped at the notion of a stalking match. He thought it a very sporting idea. And before I knew what had happened, he'd picked his man, and all hands were ready and waiting to see the fun.

“ ‘ I hope you will realise I couldn't back out then. Umchaka's champion was ready, and I couldn't refuse to let Joe face him. It would have done in our prestige for good. And Joe was so confoundedly confident. And Umchaka gave me his word that his man would use new, clean, unbarbed arrows, and I knew I could trust Umchaka's word. So I agreed.

“ ‘ The show took place in the clearing which surrounds headquarters, where the trees for a hundred yards or so have been cut down, and we burn off the bush there, of course, from time to time, to give a clear field of fire. But you know how quickly things grow in this climate, and the grass and stuff was about knee-high everywhere. This gave cover for the duellists and also gave the spectators a chance to see the fun. There were plenty of spectators, dad. All Umchaka's men were there—thousands of them, and they climbed the trees all round the clearing to get a grandstand view. It was like Twickenham at an England *v.* Scotland match, only the noise of the cheering when the champions took the field was very different. My

Liverpool-Irishman and his fifty Nubians did their best for Joe, but the sound of them was drowned out by the other side's war cry, which is a horrid sort of howling which makes your back hair stand on end.

“ ‘ Joe and his opponent stood at opposite sides of the clearing about 200 yards apart. They had their bows and three arrows each and nothing else. I fired my rifle into the air, and at the signal both men slipped into the grass and disappeared. They vanished absolutely. I was looking through my glasses, but I couldn't see a blade of grass stir. Then gradually the cries and shoutings died away and it got very still. I couldn't see anything or hear anything; nothing at all for as long as two hours. You may think this was rather dull and boring, but I tell you that that absolute quiet and stillness was the most exciting thing I've ever been through. It was rummy.

“ ‘ Suddenly I saw Joe's head sticking up out of a little bush. I was absolutely astounded, because that bush was only some thirty yards away from me, and I couldn't believe Joe had got there without me or anyone else seeing him. But there he was, and I only stopped myself just in time from shouting out a warning that he was showing himself. And then, with my glasses, I saw it wasn't Joe's head behind that bush at all. It was only Joe's hat. The old, old trick, dad. But it worked. And I imagine it worked because Joe's opponent had never worn a hat in his life. The man rose up from a clump of grass that I could have sworn

By
C. E. MONTAGUE



IN HANGING GARDEN GULLY

To climb up rocks is like all the rest of your life, only simpler and safer. In all the rest of your life, any work you may do, by way of a trade, is a taking of means to some end. That end may be good. We all hope it is. But who can be sure? Misgiving is apt to steal in. Are you a doctor—is it your job to keep all the weak ones alive? Then are you not spoiling the breed for the future? Are you a parson or politician or some sort of public improver, always trying to fight evil down? May you not then be making a muff every day of somebody else who ought to have had his dragon to fight, with his own bow and spear, when you rushed in to rob him and the other little St. Georges of discipline and of victory? Anyhow, all the good ends seem a good long way off, and the ways to them dim. You may be old by the time you are there. The salt may have lost half its savour.

No such dangers or doubts perplex the climber on rocks. He deals, day by day, with the Ultimate Good, no doubt in small nips, but still authentic and not watered down. His senses thrill with delight to find that he is just the sum of his own simple powers.

He lives on, from moment to moment, by early man's gleeful achievement of balance on one foot out of four. He hangs safe by a single hand that learnt its good grip in fifty thousand years of precarious dodging among forest boughs, with the hungry snakes looking up from the ground for a catch like the expectant fieldsman in the slips. The next little ledge, the object of all human hope and desire, is only some twelve feet away—about the length of the last leap of that naked bunch of clenched and quivering muscles, from whom you descend, at the wild horse that he had stalked through the grass. Each time that you get up a hard pitch you have succeeded in life. Besides, no-one can say you have hurt him.

Care will come back in the end: the clouds return after the rain; but for those first heavenly minutes of sitting secure and supreme at the top of Moss Ghyll of the Raven Crag Gully you are Columbus when he saw land from the rigging and Gibbon when he laid down his pen in the garden house at Lausanne. It's good for you, too; it makes you more decent. No-one, I firmly believe, could be utterly mean on the very tip of the Weisshorn. I could, if I had known the way, have written a lyric about these agreeable truths as I sat by myself in the tiny inn at Llyn Ogiwen where Telford's great London-to-Holyhead road climbs over a pass between three-thousand-foot Carnedd's and Glyders. I was a convalescent then, condemned still to a month of rest cure for body and mind. But it was June, and fine weather. Rocks had lately become dry and warm.

There are places in Britain where rock-climbing cannot honestly be called a rest cure. I mean, for the body. Look at the Coolin—all the way that a poor invalid must tramp from Sligachan southward before he gets among the rough, trusty, prehensile gabbro, the best of all God's stones. Think of Scawfell Crag, the finest crag in the world, but its base cut off from the inn by all that Sisyphean plod up the heart-breaking lengths of Brown Tongue. From Ogwen you only need walk half an hour, almost on the flat, and then—there you are, at the foot of your climb. The more I considered the matter, the more distinctly could I perceive that my doctor, when saying "Avoid all violent exercise," meant that if ever I got such an opening as this for a little "steady six-furlong work," as it is called in the training reports, I ought to take care not to miss it.

But I was the only guest at the inn. And to climb alone is counted a sin against the spirit of the sport. All the early fathers of climbing held the practice heretical. Certainly some of them—Whymper, Tyn-dall, and others—climbed by themselves when they had a mind to. Thus did King David, on distinguished occasions, relax the general tensivity of his virtue. But these exceptions could not obscure the general drift of the law and the prophets of mountaineering. Then came another pause-giving reflection. If, as the Greeks so delicately put it, anything incurable happens while you are climbing alone, your clay is exposed, defenceless and dumb, to nasty *obiter dicta* during the inquest. "Woe unto him," as Solomon says, "who is alone

when he falleth! " Insensate rustic coroners and juries, well as they may understand that riding to hounds in a stone-wall country is one of the choicer forms of prudence, will prose and grumble over extinct mountaineers. Their favourite vein is the undesirable one of their brother, the First Clown in *Hamlet*, who thought it a shame that Ophelia (she seems to have slipped up while climbing a tree) " should have countenance in this world to drown or hang herself more than her even Christian".

No mean impediments these to a sensitive, conscientious nature's design for seeking health and joy among the attractive gullies and slabs that surround Llyn Idwal. Against them I marshalled all that I could remember of St. Paul's slighting observations on the law; also any agility that I had gained in the Oxford Greats school in resolving disagreeable discords into agreeable higher harmonies. Black was certainly not white. Still, as the good Hegelian said, black might, after all, be an aspect of white. In time it was duly clear to my mind that sin lies not in the corporal act, but in the thoughts of the sinner. So long as the heart sincerely conversed with the beauty of the truths on which rested the rule of never climbing alone it mattered little what the mere legs did: your soul was not in your legs. One of casuistry's brightest triumphs had been fairly won, my liberty gained, my intellectual integrity saved, my luncheon sandwiches ordered for eight in the morning—when somebody else arrived at the inn.

He stood confessed a botanist—he had the large green cylindrical can of the tribe, oval in section and hung by a strap from the shoulder, like the traditional *vivandière's* little cask in French art. He was also, I found while we smoked through that evening together, a good fellow. He had, too, a good leg, if one only. The other was stiff and unbendable at the knee. He had broken it last year, he said, and the bones seemed to have set only too hard, or else Nature had gracelessly grudged to the mended knee-joint of her lover a proper supply of whatever substitute she uses for ball bearings.

His name was Darwin. "No relation, really," he humbly assured me. His father was only some obscure squire. The son's Christian name had been Charles at the font, but on coming of age the dear fellow had felt it immodest to prey any more than he need upon his eponymous hero's thrice-honoured names. So he had meekly converted the Charles by deed poll into Thomas. This lowly and beautiful gesture convinced me, as you may suppose, that here was the man to go climbing with. He was indeed one of the innocent, one-thoughted kind that wake up happy each day and never turn crusty, and always think you are being too good to them.

One lure alone had drawn him to these outworks of Snowdon. Some eccentric flower grew on these heights, and a blank page in one of his books of squashed specimens ached for it. Was it so lovely? I asked, like a goose. He was too gentle to snub me.

But all that fellow's thoughts shone out through his face. Every flower that blew—to this effect did his soul mildly rebuke mine—was beauteous beyond Helen's eyes. All he said was: "No, not fair, perhaps, to outward view as many roses be; but, just think!—it grows on no patch of ground in the world but these crags!"

"It is not merely better dressed," said I, "than Solomon. It is wiser."

It was about then, I think, that the heart of the man who had gone mad on the green-stuff and that of the man who knew what was what, in the way of a recreation, rushed together like Paolo's and Francesca's. What had already become an *entente cordiale* ripened at tropical speed into alliance. Darwin had found a second, half-invalided perhaps, but still the holder of two unqualified legs, for to-morrow's quest of his own particular Grail. To me it now seemed to be no accident that Darwin had come to the inn: it was ordained, like the more permanent union of marriage, for a remedy against sin, and to avoid climbing alone.

We got down to business at once. A charming gully, I told him, led right up to the big crag over Cwm Idwal. Not Twll Du, the ill-famed Devil's Kitchen. That, I frankly said, was justly *detestata matribus*—wet and rotten and lethal, and quite flowerless too. My gully, though close to that man-eating climb, was quite another affair. Mine was the place for town children to spend a happy day in the country: the very place also for starting the day's search for the object of Darwin's desire. In saying this, too, I was

honest. Lots of plants grow in some gullies; ferns, mosses, grasses, all sorts of greens flourish in a damp cleft, like hair in an armpit; why not one kind of waste rabbit-food as well as another? You see, I had not been a casuist merely, before Darwin came. I had used the eyes Heaven gave me, and reconnoitred the gully well from below, and if any flower knew how to tell good from bad, in the way of a scramble, it would be there. I ended upon a good note. The place's name, I said impressively, was Hanging Garden Gully, no doubt because of the rich indigenous flora.

His eyes shone at that, and we went straight to the kitchen to ask Mrs. Jones for the loan of a rope. I had none with me that journey: the sick are apt to relinquish improvidently these necessities of a perfect life. Now, in the classics of mountaineering the right thing in such cases of improvised enterprise is that the landlady lends you her second-best clothes-line. Far happier we, Mrs. Jones having by her a 120-foot length of the right Alpine rope, with the red worsted thread in its middle. It had been left in her charge by a famous pillar of the Scottish Mountaineering Club till he should come that way again. "The gentleman," Mrs. Jones told us, "said I was always to let any climbing gentlemen use it." Heaven was palpably smiling upon our attempt.

The sun smiled benedictively, too, on the halt and the sick as they stood, about nine the next morning, roping up at the foot of their climb. "A fisherman's bend," I took care to explain, as I knotted one end of the rope round Darwin's chest.

"The botanical name," he replied—"did I tell you?—is *Lloydia*." How some men do chatter when they are happy! Can't carry their beans.

We were not likely to need the whole 120 feet of the rope. So I tied myself on at its middle and coiled the odd 60 feet round my shoulder. "A double overhand knot," I confessed, as I tightened it round me. "A bad knot, but for once it may do us no harm."

"The vernacular name," said the garrulous fellow, "is spiderwort."

"Tut, tut!" I inwardly said.

The lower half of that gully was easier than it had looked: just enough in it to loosen your muscles and make you want more. Higher up, the gully grew shallow and had greater interest. The top part of all, as I remember it now, might be called either a chimney or crack, being both. In horizontal section, it was a large obtuse angle indented into the face of the crag. The crag at this part, and the gully's bed with it, rose at an angle of some 60 degrees. Now, when you climb rock at an angle of 60 degrees the angle seems to be just 90. In early mountaineering records the pioneers often say, "Our situation was critical. Above us the crag rose vertical," or, "To descend was impossible now. But in front the rocky face, for some time perpendicular, had now begun to overhang." If you take a clinometer to the scenes of some of those liberal estimates you blush for your kind. The slope of the steepest—and easiest—ridge of the three by which the Matterhorn is climbed is only 39 degrees. But this,

though not purely digressive, is partly so. All that strictly had to be said was that an upright and very obtuse-angled trough in smooth rock that rises at 60 degrees cannot be climbed.

But in the very bed of our trough there had been eroded, from top to bottom, a deepish irregular crack in the rock. Into this crack, at most parts, you could stick a foot, a knee, or an arm. Also, the sides of the large obtuse angle, when you looked closely, were not utterly smooth. On the right wall, as we looked up, certain small wrinkles, bunions, and other minute but lovable diversities in the face of the stone gave promise of useful points of resistance for any right boot that might scrape about on the wall in the hope of exerting auxiliary lateral pressure, while the left arm and thigh, hard at work in the crack, wriggled you up by a succession of caterpillarish squirms. This delectable passage was 80 feet high, as I measured it with my experienced eye. An inexperienced measuring-tape might have put it at fifty. To any new recruit to the cause—above all, to one with a leg as inflexible as the stoniest stone that it pressed—I felt that the place was likely to offer all that he could wish in the line of baptisms of fire. Still, as the pioneers said, to descend was impossible now: the crack was too sweet to be left. And Darwin, thus far, had come up like a lamplighter, really. I told him so, frankly. Alpine guides are the men at psychology. Do they not get the best out of the rawest new client, in any hard place, by ceasing to hide the high estimate that they

have formed of his natural endowment for the sport? "*Vous êtes—je vous dis franchement, monsieur—un chamois ! Un véritable chat de montagne !*"

I was leading the party. I was the old hand. Besides, I could bend both my knees. Desiring Darwin to study my movements, so that he presently might—so far as conformity would not cramp his natural talents—copy them closely, I now addressed myself to the crack. When halfway up I heard the voice of a good child enduring, with effort, a painful call upon its patience. "Any Lloydia yet?" it wistfully said. Between my feet I saw Darwin below. Well, he was certainly paying the rope out all right, as I had enjoined; but he did it "like them that dream". His mind was not in it. All the time he was peering hungrily over the slabby containing walls of the gully, and now he just pawed one of them here and there with a tentative foot—you know how a puppy, when first it sees ice, paws the face of the pond. "These botanists!" I thought. "These fanatics!" You know how during a happy physical effort—a race or a hunt, a fight or a game—you think, with a sort of internal quiet, about a lot of old things. There came back to my mind the old lines that I had once had to make Latin verse of:

*How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their incessant labours see
Crowned from some single herb or tree.*

Meanwhile I took a precaution. I first unroped myself. Then I passed the rope, from below, through the space behind a stone that was jammed fast in the crack. Then I roped myself on again, just at my old place on the rope. A plague of a job it was, too, with all those 60 feet of spare rope to uncoil and re-coil. But you see how it worked: I had now got the enthusiast moored. Between him and me the rope went through the eye of a needle, so I could go blithely on. I went. In the top of the crack I found a second jammed stone. It was bigger than number one: in fact, it blocked the way and made you clamber round outside it rather interestingly; but it, too, had daylight showing through a hole behind it. Sounds from below were again improving my natural stock of prudence. You can't, I thought, be too safe. Once more I unroped, just under this chockstone, and pushed the rope up through the hole at its back. When the rope fell down to me, outwards over the top of the stone, I tied on again, just as before, and then scrambled up over the outer side of the stone with an ecstatic pull on both arms, and sat on its top in the heaven that big-game hunters know when they lie up against the slain tiger and smoke.

If you have bent up your mind to take in the details, you will now have an imposing vision of the connections of Darwin and me with each other and with the Primary or Palæozoic rocks of Cambria. From Darwin, tied on to its end, the rope ran, as freely as a bootlace runs through the eyelets, behind the jammed

stone 30 feet above his head, and then again behind my present throne of glory at the top; then it was tied on to me; and then there were 60 feet, half its length, left over to play with.

Clearly Darwin, not being a thread, or even a rope, could not come up the way that the rope did, through the two needle-eyes. Nor did I care, he being the thing that he was, to bid him untie and then to pull up his end of the rope through the eyes, drop it down to him clear through the air, and tell him to tie on again. He was, as the Irish say of the distraught, "fit to be tied", and not at all fit for the opposite. If he were loose he might at any moment espy that Circe of his in some place out of bounds. There seemed to be only one thing to do. I threw down the spare 60 feet of the rope, and told him first to tie himself on to its end, and then, but not before, to untie himself from the other. I could not quite see these orders obeyed. A bulge of rock came between him and my eyes, but I was explicit. "Remember that fisherman's bend!" I shouted. Perhaps my voice was rather austere; but who would not forgive a wise virgin for saying, a little dryly, to one of the foolish, "Well, use your spare can"? As soon as he sang out "All right" I took a good haul on what was now the working half of the rope, to test his knot-making. Yes, he *was* all right. So I bade him come up, and he started. Whenever he looked up I saw that he had a wild, gadding eye; and whenever he stopped to breathe during the struggle he gasped, "I can't see it yet".

He came nearly half-way, and then he did see it. He had just reached the worst part. Oh, the Sirens know when to start singing! That flower of evil was far out of his reach, or of what his reach ought to have been. Some twelve feet away on his right it was rooted in some infinitesimal pocket of blown soil, a mere dirty thumb-nailful of clay. For a moment the lover eyed the beloved across one huge slab of steep stone with no real foothold or handhold upon it—only a few efflorescent minutiae small as the bubukles and wheelks and knobs on the nose of some fossil Bardolph. The whole wall of the gully just there was what any man who could climb would have written off as unclimbable. Passion, however, has her own standards, beyond the comprehension of the wise:

*His eye but saw that light of love,
The only star it hailed above.*

My lame Leander gave one whinny of desire. Then he left all and made for his Hero.

You know the way that a man, who has no idea how badly he bats, will sometimes go in and hit an unplayable bowler right out of the ground, simply because the batsman is too green to know that the bowler cannot be played. Perhaps that was the way. Or perhaps your sound climber, having his wits, may leave, at his boldest, a margin of safety, as engineers call it, so wide that a madman may cut quite a lot off its edge without coming surely to grief. Or was it only a joke of the gods among themselves over

their wine? Or can it be that the special arrangements known to be made for the safety of sailors, when in their cups, are extended at times to cover the case of collectors overcome by the strong waters of the acquisitive instinct? Goodness knows! Whatever the powers that helped him, this crippled man, who had never tried climbing before, went skating off to his right flank, across that impossible slant, on one foot and one stilt, making a fool of the science of mountaineering.

I vetoed, I imprecated, I grew Athanasian. All utterly useless. As soon could you whistle a dog back to heel when he fleets off on fire with some fresh amour. I could only brace myself, take a good hold of the rope in both hands, and be ready to play the wild salmon below as soon as he slipped and the line ran out tight. While I waited I saw, for the first time, another piquant detail of our case. Darwin, absorbed in his greed, had never untied the other end of the rope. So he was now tied on to both ends. The whole rope made a circle, a vicious circle. Our whole caravan was sewn on to the bony structure of Wales with two big stitches, one at each jammed stone.

You see how it would work. When Darwin should fall, as he must, and hang in the air from my hands, gravitation would swing him back into the centre of the chimney, straight below me, bashing him hard against the chimney's opposite wall. No doubt he would be stunned. I should never be able to hoist his dead weight through the air to my perch, so I should have to lower him to the foot of the chimney.

That would just use up the full 60 feet of rope. It would run the two 60-foot halves of the rope so tight that I should never be able to undo the bad central knot that confined me. Could I but cut it when Darwin was lowered into provisional safety, and then climb down to see to him! No; I had lost my knife two days ago. I should be like a netted lion, with no mouse to bite through his cords: a Prometheus, bound to his rock.

But life spoils half her best crises. That wretch never slipped. He that by this time had no sort of right to his life came back as he went, treading on air, but now with that one bloom of the spiderwort in his mouth. Apologising for slowness, and panting with haste, he writhed up the crack till his head appeared over the chockstone beside me. Then he gave one cry of joy, surged up over the stone, purring with pleasure, and charged the steep slope of slippery grass above the precipice we had scaled. "You never told me!" he cried; and then for the first time I noticed that up here the whole place was speckled with *Lloydia*. The next moment Darwin fell suddenly backwards, as if Lloyd himself or some demon gardener of his had planted a very straight one on the chin of the onrushing trespasser in his pleasaunce. You guess? Yes. One of his two tethers, the one coming up from behind the lower jammed stone, had run out; it had pulled him up short as he leapt upon the full fruition of his desire.

He was easy to field as he rolled down the grass. But his tug on the rope had worked it well into some

crevice between the lower jammed stone and the wall of the crack. We were anchored now, good and fast, to that stone, more than three fathoms below. What to do now? Climb down and clear the jammed rope? Leave that lame voluptuary rioting upon a precipice's edge? Scarcely wise—would it have been? Puzzled and angry, I cast away shame. I knew well that as Spartan troops had to come back with their shields or upon them, or else have trouble with their mothers, a climber who leaves his tackle behind in a retreat is likely to be a scorn and a hissing. Still, I cast away shame. Ours was no common case; no common ethics would meet it. I untied us both, and threw both ends of the rope down the chimney; then I let Darwin graze for a minute; then I drove him relentlessly up the steep grass to the top of the crag, and round by the easy walking way down.

As we passed down the valley below, I looked up. The whole length of our chimney was visibly draped with the pendent double length of that honest Scots mountaineer's rope. "I don't really know how to thank you enough," Darwin was babbling beside me, "for giving me such a day!"

But I felt as if I were one of the villains in plays who compromise women of virtue and rank by stealing their fans and leaving them lying about in the rooms of bad bachelors. Much might be said for climbing alone, no matter what the authorities thought. A good time it would be, all to myself, when I came back to salvage that rope.

By
ROLAND PERTWEE



THE RIVER GOD

When I was a little boy I had a friend who was a colonel. He was not the kind of colonel you meet nowadays, who manages a motor showroom in the West End of London and wears crocodile shoes and a small moustache and who calls you "old man" and slaps your back, independent of the fact that you may have been no more than a private in the war. My colonel was of the older order that takes a third of a century and a lot of Indian sun and Madras curry in the making.

A veteran of the Mutiny he was, and wore side whiskers to prove it.

Once he came upon a number of sepoy conspiring mischief in a byre with a barrel of gunpowder. So he put the butt of his cheroot into the barrel and presently they all went to hell. That was the kind of man he was in the way of business.

In the way of pleasure he was very different. In the way of pleasure he wore an old Norfolk coat that smelt of heather and brine, and which had no elbows to speak of. And he wore a Sherlock Holmesy kind of cap with a swarm of salmon flies upon it, that to

my boyish fancy was more splendid than a crown. I cannot remember his legs, because they were nearly always under water, hidden in great canvas waders. But once he sent me a photograph of himself riding on a tricycle, so I expect he had some knickerbockers too, which would have been that tight kind, with box cloth under the knees.

Boys don't take much stock of clothes. His head occupied my imagination. A big, brave, white-haired head with cherry-red rugose cheeks and honest, laughing, puckered eyes, with gun-powder marks in their corners.

People at the little Welsh fishing inn where we met said he was a bore; but I knew him to be a god and shall prove it.

I was ten years old and his best friend.

He was seventy something and my hero.

Properly I should not have mentioned my hero so soon in this narrative. He belongs to a later epoch, but sometimes it is forgivable to start with a boast, and now that I have committed myself I lack the courage to call upon my colonel to fall back two paces to the rear, quick march, and wait until he is wanted.

The real beginning takes place, as I remember, somewhere in Hampshire on the Grayshott Road, among sandy banks, sentinel firs, and plum-coloured wastes of heather. Summer-holiday time it was, and I was among folks whose names have since vanished like lizards under the stones of forgetfulness.

Perhaps it was a picnic walk; perhaps I carried a basket and was told not to swing it for fear of bursting its cargo of ginger beer. In those days ginger beer had big bulgy corks held down with string. In a hot sun or under stress of too much agitation the string would break and the corks fly. Then there would be a merry foaming fountain and someone would get reproached.

One of our company had a fishing rod. He was a young man who, one day, was to be an uncle of mine. But that didn't concern me. What concerned me was the fishing rod, and presently—perhaps because he felt he must keep in with the family—he let me carry it.

To the fisherman born there is nothing so provoking of curiosity as a fishing rod in a case. Surreptitiously I opened the flap, which contained a small brass spear in a wee pocket, and, pulling down the case a little, I admired the beauties of the cork butt, with its gun-metal ferrule and reel rings and the exquisite frail slenderness of two top joints.

“It's got two top joints—two!” I exclaimed ecstatically.

“Of course,” said he. “All good trout rods have two.”

I marvelled in silence at what seemed to me then a combination of extravagance and excellent precaution.

There must have been something inherently under-

standing and noble about that young man who would one day be my uncle, for, taking me by the arm, he sat me down on a tuft of heather and took the pieces of rod from the case and fitted them together.

The rest of the company moved on and left me in paradise.

It is thirty-five years ago since that moment and not one detail of it is forgotten. There sounds in my ears to-day as clearly as then the faint, clear pop made by the little cork stoppers with their boxwood tops as they were withdrawn. I remember how, before fitting the pieces together, he rubbed the ferrules against the side of his nose to prevent them sticking. I remember looking up the length of it through a tunnel of sneck rings to the eyelet at the end. Not until he had fixed a reel and passed a line through the rings did he put the lovely thing into my hand.

So light it was, so firm, so persuasive; such a thing alive—a sceptre. I could do no more than say "Oo!" and again, "Oo!"

"A thrill, ain't it?" said he.

I had no need to answer that. In my new-found rapture was only one sorrow—the knowledge that such happiness would not endure, and that, all too soon, a blank and rodless future awaited me.

"They must be awfully—awfully 'spensive," I said.

"Couple of guineas," he replied off-handedly.

A couple of guineas! And we were poor folk and the future was more rodless than ever.

"Then I shall save and save and save," I said.

And my imagination started to add up twopence a week into guineas. Two hundred and forty pennies to the pound, multiplied by two—four hundred and eighty—and then another twenty-four pennies—five hundred and four. Why, it would take a lifetime, and no sweets, no elastic for catapults, no penny novelty boxes or air-gun bullets or ices or anything.

Tragedy must have been writ large upon my face, for he said suddenly, "When's your birthday?"

I was almost ashamed to tell him how soon it was. Perhaps he, too, was a little taken aback by its proximity, for that future uncle of mine was not so rich as uncles should be.

"We must see about it."

"But it wouldn't—it couldn't be one like that," I said.

I must have touched his pride, for he answered loftily, "Certainly it will."

In the fortnight that followed I walked on air and told everybody I had as "good as got a couple-of-guineas rod".

No-one can deceive a child, save the child himself, and when my birthday came and with it a long brown paper parcel, I knew, even before I had removed the wrappers, that this two-guinea rod was not worth the money. There was a brown linen case, it is true, but it was not a case with a neat compartment for each joint, nor was there a spear in the flap. There was only one top instead of two, and there were no popping

little stoppers to protect the ferrules from dust and injury. The lower joint boasted no elegant cork hand piece, but was a tapered affair coarsely made and rudely varnished.

When I fitted the pieces together, what I balanced in my hand was tough and stodgy rather than limber. The reel, which had come in a different parcel, was of wood. It had neither check nor brake, and the line overran and back-wound itself with distressing frequency.

I had not read and reread Gamages' price list without knowing something of rods, and I did not need to look long at this rod before realising that it was no match to the one I had handled on the Grayshott Road.

I believe at first a great sadness possessed me, but very presently imagination came to the rescue. For I told myself that I had only to think that this was the rod of all other rods that I desired most and it would be so. And it was so.

Furthermore, I told myself that, in this great wide, ignorant world, but few people existed with such expert knowledge of rods as I possessed. That I had but to say, "Here is the final word in good rods," and they would accept it as such.

Very confidently I tried the experiment on my mother, with inevitable success. From the depths of her affection and her ignorance on all such matters she produced:

"It's a magnificent rod."

I went my way, knowing full well that she knew not what she said, but that she was kind.

With rather less confidence I approached my father, saying, "Look, father! It cost two guineas. It's absolutely the best sort you can get."

And he, after waggling it a few moments in silence, quoted cryptically:

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

Young as I was, I had some curiosity about words, and on any other occasion I would have called on him to explain. But this I did not do, but left hurriedly, for fear that he should explain.

In the two years that followed, I fished every day in the slip of a back garden of our tiny London house. And, having regard to the fact that this rod was never fashioned to throw a fly, I acquired a pretty knack in the fullness of time and performed some glib casting at the nasturtiums and marigolds that flourished by the back wall.

My parents' fortunes must have been in the ascendant, I suppose, for I call to mind an unforgettable breakfast when my mother told me that father had decided we should spend our summer holiday at a Welsh hotel on the river Lledr. The place was called Pont-y-pant, and she showed me a picture of the hotel with a great knock-me-down river creaming past the front of it.

Although in my dreams I had heard fast water

often enough, I had never seen it, and the knowledge that in a month's time I should wake with the music of a cataract in my ears was almost more than patience could endure.

In that exquisite, intolerable period of suspense I suffered as only childish longing and enthusiasm can suffer. Even the hank of gut that I bought and bent into innumerable casts failed to alleviate that suffering. I would walk for miles for a moment's delight captured in gluing my nose to the windows of tackleists' shops in the West End.

I learned from my grandmother—a wise and calm old lady—how to make nets and, having mastered the art, I made myself a landing net. This I set up on a frame fashioned from a penny schoolmaster's cane bound to an old walking stick. It would be pleasant to record that this was a good and serviceable net, but it was not. It flopped over in a very distressing fashion when called upon to lift the lightest weight. I had to confess to myself that I had more enthusiasm than skill in the manufacture of such articles.

At school there was a boy who had a fishing creel, which he swapped with me for a Swedish knife, a copy of *Rogues of the Fiery Cross*, and an Easter egg which I had kept on account of its rare beauty.

He had forced a hard bargain and was sure he had the best of it, but I knew otherwise.

At last the great day dawned, and after infinite travel by train we reached our destination as the glow

of sunset was greying into dark. The river was in spate, and as we crossed a tall stone bridge on our way to the hotel I heard it below me, barking and grumbling among great rocks. I was pretty far gone in tiredness, for I remember little else that night but a rod rack in the hall—a dozen rods of different sorts and sizes, with gaudy salmon flies, some nets, a gaff, and an oak coffer upon which lay a freshly caught salmon on a blue ashet. Then supper by candlelight, bed, a glitter of stars through the open window, and the ceaseless drumming of water.

By six o'clock next morning I was on the river bank, fitting my rod together and watching in awe the great brown ribbon of water go fleetly by.

Among my most treasured possessions were half a dozen flies, and two of these I attached to the cast with exquisite care. While so engaged, a shadow fell on the grass beside me and, looking up, I beheld a lank, shabby individual with a walrus moustache and an unhealthy face, who, the night before, had helped with our luggage at the station.

“Water’s too heavy for flies,” said he, with an up-tilting inflection. “This evening, yes; now, no—none whateffer. Better try with a worrum in the burrun.”

He pointed at a busy little brook which tumbled down the steep hillside and joined the main stream at the garden end.

“C-couldn’t I fish with a fly in the—the burrun?” I asked, for although I wanted to catch a fish very

badly, for honour's sake I would fain take it on a fly.

"Indeed, no," he replied, slanting the tone of his voice skyward. "You cootn't. Neffer. And that isn't a fly rod whateffer."

"It is," I replied hotly. "Yes, it is."

But he only shook his head and repeated, "No," and took the rod from my hand and illustrated its awkwardness and handed it back with a wretched laugh.

If he had pitched me into the river I should have been happier.

"It is a fly rod and it cost two guineas," I said, and my lower lip trembled.

"Neffer," he repeated. "Five shillings would be too much."

Even a small boy is entitled to some dignity.

Picking up my basket, I turned without another word and made for the hotel. Perhaps my eyes were blinded with tears, for I was about to plunge into the dark hall when a great, rough, kindly voice arrested me with:

"Easy does it."

At the thick end of an immense salmon rod there strode out into the sunlight the noblest figure I had ever seen.

There is no real need to describe my colonel again—I have done so already—but the temptation is too great. Standing in the doorway, the sixteen-foot rod in hand, the deer-stalker hat, besprent with flies,

crowning his shaggy head, the waders, like seven-league boots, braced up to his armpits, the creel across his shoulder, a gaff across his back, he looked what he was—a god. His eyes met mine with that kind of smile one good man keeps for another.

“An early start,” he said. “Any luck, old fellar?”

I told him I hadn’t started—not yet.

“Wise chap,” said he. “Water’s a bit heavy for trouting. It’ll soon run down through. Let’s vet those flies of yours.”

He took my rod and whipped it expertly.

“A nice piece—new, eh?”

“N-not quite,” I stammered; “but I haven’t used it yet, sir, in water.”

That god read men’s minds.

“I know—garden practice; capital; nothing like it.”

Releasing my cast, he frowned critically over the flies—a Blue Dun and a March Brown.

“Think so?” he queried. “You don’t think it’s a shade late in the season for these fancies?” I said I thought perhaps it was. “Yes, I think you’re right,” said he. “I believe in this big water you’d do better with a livelier pattern. Teal and Red, Cock-y-bundy, Greenwell’s Glory.”

I said nothing, but nodded gravely at these brave names.

Once more he read my thoughts and saw through the wicker sides of my creel a great emptiness.

"I expect you've fished most in southern rivers. These Welsh trout have a fancy for a spot of colour."

He rummaged in the pocket of his Norfolk jacket and produced a round tin which once had held saddle soap.

"Collar on to that," said he; "there's a proper pickle of flies and casts in that tin that, as a keen fisherman, you won't mind sorting out. Still, they may come in useful."

"But, I say, you don't mean——" I began.

"Yes, go on; stick to it. All fishermen are members of the same club, and I'm giving the trout a rest for a bit." His eyes ranged the hills and trees opposite. "I must be getting on with it before the sun's too high."

Waving his free hand, he strode away and presently was lost to view at a bend in the road.

I think my mother was a little piqued by my abstraction during breakfast. My eyes never for an instant deserted the round tin box which lay open beside my plate. Within it were a paradise and a hundred miracles all tangled together in the pleasantest disorder. My mother said something about a lovely walk over the hills, but I had other plans, which included a very glorious hour which should be spent untangling and wrapping up in neat squares of paper my new treasures.

"I suppose he knows best what he wants to do," she said.

So it came about that I was left alone, and betook myself to a sheltered spot behind a rock where all the delicious disorder was remedied and I could take stock of what was mine.

I am sure there were at least six casts all set up with flies, and ever so many loose flies and one great stout, tapered cast, with a salmon fly upon it, that was so rich in splendour that I doubted if my benefactor could really have known that it was there.

I felt almost guilty at owning so much, and not until I had done full justice to everything did I fasten a new cast to my line and go a-fishing.

There is a lot said and written about beginner's luck, but none of it came my way. Indeed, I spent most of the morning extricating my line from the most fearsome tangles. I had no skill in throwing a cast with two droppers upon it and I found it was an art not to be learned in a minute.

Then, from overeagerness, I was too snappy with my back cast, whereby before many minutes had gone I heard that warning crack behind me that betokens the loss of a tail fly. I must have spent half an hour searching the meadow for that lost fly and finding it not. Which is not strange, for I wonder has any fisherman ever found that lost fly. The reeds, the buttercups, and the little people with many legs who run in the wet grass conspire together to keep the secret of its hiding place.

I gave up at last, and with a feeling of shame that was only proper, I invested a new fly on the

point of my cast and set to work again, but more warily.

In that hard racing water a good strain was put upon my rod, and before the morning was out it was creaking at the joints in a way that kept my heart continually in my mouth. It is the duty of a rod to work with a single smooth action and by no means to divide its performance into three sections of activity. It is a hard task for any angler to persuade his line austerely if his rod behaves thus.

When, at last, my father strolled up the river bank, walking, to his shame, much nearer the water than a good fisherman should, my nerves were jumpy from apprehension.

"Come along. Food's ready. Done any good?" he said.

Again it was to his discredit that he put food before sport, but I told him I had had a wonderful morning, and he was glad.

"What do you want to do this afternoon, old man?" he asked.

"Fish," I said.

"But you can't always fish," he said.

I told him I could, and I was right, and have proved it for thirty years and more.

"Well, well," he said, "please yourself, but isn't it dull not catching anything?"

And I said, as I've said a thousand times since, "As if it could be."

So that afternoon I went downstream instead of

up, and found myself in difficult country where the river boiled between the narrows of two hills. Stunted oaks overhung the water and great boulders opposed its flow. Presently I came to a sort of natural flight of steps—a pool and a cascade three times repeated—and there, watching the maniac fury of the waters in awe and wonderment, I saw the most stirring sight in my young life.

I saw a silver salmon leap superbly from the cauldron below into the pool above. And I saw another and another salmon do likewise. And I wonder the eyes of me did not fall out of my head.

I cannot say how long I stayed watching that gallant pageant of leaping fish—in ecstasy there is no measurement of time—but at last it came upon me that all the salmon in the sea were careering past me and that if I were to realise my soul's desire I must hasten to the pool below before the last of them had gone by.

It was a mad adventure, for until I had discovered that stout cast, with the gaudy fly attached in the tin box, I had given no thought to such noble quarry. My recent possessions had put ideas into my head above my station and beyond my powers. Failure, however, means little to the young, and, walking fast, yet gingerly, for fear of breaking my rod top against a tree, I followed the path downstream until I came to a great basin of water into which, through a narrow throat, the river thundered like a storm.

At the head of the pool was a plate of rock scored by the nails of fishermen's boots, and here I sat me

down to wait while the salmon cast, removed from its wrapper, was allowed to soak and soften in a puddle left by the rain.

And while I waited a salmon rolled not ten yards from where I sat. Head and tail, up and down he went, a great monster of a fish, sporting and deriding me.

With that performance so near at hand, I have often wondered how I was able to control my fingers well enough to tie a figure-eight knot between the line and the cast. But I did, and I'm proud to be able to record it. Your true-born angler does not go blindly to work until he has first satisfied his conscience. There is a pride, in knots, of which the laity knows nothing, and if, through neglect to tie them rightly, failure and loss should result pride may not be restored nor conscience salved by the plea of eagerness.

With my trembling fingers I bent the knot, and with a pummelling heart, launched the line into the broken water at the throat of the pool.

At first the mere tug of the water against that large fly was so thrilling to me that it was hard to believe that I had not hooked a whale. The trembling line swung round in a wide arc into a calm eddy below where I stood. Before casting afresh I shot a glance over my shoulder to assure myself there was no limb of a tree behind me to foul the fly. And this was a gallant cast, true and straight, with a couple of yards more length than its predecessor, and a wide radius. Instinctively I knew, as if the surface had been marked

with a X where the salmon had risen, that my fly must pass right over the spot. As it swung by, my nerves were strained like piano wires. I think I knew that something tremendous, impossible, terrifying was going to happen. The sense, the certitude was so strong in me that I half opened my mouth to shout a warning to the monster, not to.

I must have felt very, very young in that moment. I, who that same day had been talked to as a man by a man among men. The years were stripped from me and I was what I was—ten years old and appalled.

And then, with the suddenness of a rocket, it happened. The water was cut into a swathe. I remember a silver loop bearing downwards—a bright, shining, vanishing thing like the bobbin of my mother's sewing machine—and a tug. I shall never forget the viciousness of that tug. I had my fingers tight upon the line, so I got the full force of it. To counteract a tendency to go head first into the spinning water below, I threw myself backward and sat down on the hard rock with a jar that shut my teeth on my tongue—like the jaws of a trap.

Luckily I had let the rod go out straight with the line, else it must have snapped in the first frenzy of the down stream rush. Little ass that I was, I tried to check the speeding line with my forefinger, with the result that it cut and burnt me to the bone. There wasn't above twenty yards of line in the reel, and the wretched contrivance was trying to be rid of the line even faster than the fish was wrenching it out.

Heaven knows why it didn't snarl, for great loops and whorls were whirling, like Catherine wheels, under my wrist. An instant's glance revealed the terrifying fact that there were not more than half a dozen yards left on the reel, and the fish showed no sign of abating his rush. With the realisation of impending and inevitable catastrophe upon me, I launched a yell for help, which, rising above the roar of the waters, went echoing down the gorge.

And then, to add to my terrors, the salmon leaped—a swinging leap like a silver arch appearing and instantly disappearing upon the broken surface. So mighty, so all-powerful he seemed in that sublime moment that I lost all sense of reason and raised the rod, with a sudden jerk, above my head.

I have often wondered, had the rod actually been the two-guinea rod my imagination claimed for it, whether it could have withstood the strain thus violently and unreasonably imposed upon it. The wretched thing that I held so grimly never even put up a fight. It snapped at the ferrule of the lower joint and plunged like a toboggan down the slanting line, to vanish into the black depths of the water.

My horror at this calamity was so profound that I was lost even to the consciousness that the last of my line had run out. A couple of vicious tugs advised me of this awful truth. Then, snap! The line parted at the reel, flickered out through the rings, and was gone. I was left with nothing but the butt of a broken

rod in my hand, and an agony of mind that even now I cannot recall without emotion.

I am not ashamed to confess that I cried. I lay down on the rock with my cheek in the puddle where I had soaked the cast, and plenished it with my tears. For what had the future left for me but a cut and burning finger, a badly bumped behind, the single joint of a broken rod, and no faith in uncles?

How long I lay there weeping I do not know. Ages, perhaps, or minutes, or seconds.

I was roused by a rough hand on my shoulder, and a kindly voice demanding, "Hurt yourself, Ike Walton?"

Blinking away my tears, I pointed at my broken rod with a bleeding forefinger.

"Come! This is bad luck," said my colonel, his face grave as a stone. "How did it happen?"

"I c-caught a s-salmon."

"You what?" he said.

"I d-did," I said.

He looked at me long and earnestly; then, taking my injured hand, he looked at that and nodded.

"The poor groundlings who can find no better use for a river than something to put a bridge over think all fishermen are liars," said he. "But we know better, eh? By the bumps and breaks and cuts I'd say you made a plucky fight against heavy odds. Let's hear all about it."

So, with his arm round my shoulders and his great shaggy head near to mine, I told him all about it.

At the end he gave me a mighty and comforting squeeze, and he said, "The loss of one's first big fish is the heaviest loss I know. One feels, whatever happens, one'll never——" He stopped and pointed dramatically. "There it goes—see! Down there at the tail of the pool!"

In the broken water where the pool emptied itself into the shallows beyond I saw the top joints of my rod dancing on the surface.

"Come on!" he shouted, and gripping my hand, jerked me to my feet. "Scatter your legs! There's just a chance!"

Dragging me after him, we raced along by the river path to the end of the pool, where, on a narrow promontory of grass, his enormous salmon rod was lying.

"Now," he said, picking it up and making the line whistle to and fro in the air with sublime authority, "keep your eyes skinned on those shallows for another glimpse of it."

A second later I was shouting, "There! There!"

He must have seen the rod point at the same moment, for his line flowed out and the big fly hit the water with a plop not a couple of feet from the spot.

He let it ride on the current, playing it with a sensitive touch like the brushwork of an artist.

"Half a jiffy!" he exclaimed at last. "Wait! Yes, I think so. Cut down to that rock and see if I haven't fished up the line."

I needed no second invitation and presently was yelling, "Yes—yes, you have!"

"Stretch yourself out then and collar hold of it."

With the most exquisite care he navigated the line to where I lay stretched upon the rock. Then:

"Right you are! Good lad! I'm coming down."

Considering his age, he leaped the rocks like a chamois.

"Now," he said, and took the wet line delicately between his forefinger and thumb. One end trailed limply downstream, but the other end seemed anchored in the big pool where I had had my unequal and disastrous contest.

Looking into his face, I saw a sudden light of excitement dancing in his eyes.

"Odd," he muttered, "but not impossible."

"What isn't?" I asked breathlessly.

"Well, it looks to me as if the top joints of that rod of yours have gone downstream."

Gingerly he pulled up the line, and presently an end with a broken knot appeared.

"The reel knot, eh?" I nodded gloomily. "Then we lose the rod," said he. That wasn't very heartening news. "On the other hand, it's just possible the fish is still on—sulking."

"Oo!" I exclaimed.

"Now, steady does it," he warned, "and give me my rod."

Taking a pair of clippers from his pocket, he cut his own line just above the cast.

"Can you tie a knot?" he asked.

"Yes," I nodded.

"Come on then; bend your line on to mine. Quick as lightning."

Under his critical eye I joined the two lines with a blood knot. "I guessed you were a fisherman," he said, nodded approvingly, and clipped off the ends. "And now to know the best or the worst."

I shall never forget the music of that check reel or the suspense with which I watched as, with the butt of the rod bearing against the hollow of his thigh, he steadily wound up the wet slack line. Every instant I expected it to come drifting downstream, but it didn't. Presently it rose in a tight slant from the pool above.

"Snagged, I'm afraid," he said, and worked the rod with an easy straining motion to and fro. "Yes, I'm afraid—no, by Lord Bobs, he's on!"

I think it was only right and proper that I should have launched a yell of triumph as, with the spoken word, the point at which the line cut the water shifted magically from the left side of the pool to the right.

"And a fish too," said he.

In the fifteen minutes that followed, I must have experienced every known form of terror and delight.

"Youngster," said he, "you should be doing this by rights, but I'm afraid the rod's a bit above your weight."

"Oh, go on and catch him," I pleaded.

"And so I will," he promised; "unship the gaff, young un, and stand by to use it, and if you break the cast we'll never speak to each other again, and that's a bet."

But I didn't break the cast. The noble, courageous, indomitable example of my river god had lent me skill and precision beyond my years. When at long last a weary, beaten, silver monster rolled within reach of my arm into a shallow eddy, the steel gaff shot out fair and true and sank home.

And then I was lying on the grass, with my arms round a salmon that weighed twenty-two pounds on the scale and contained every sort of happiness known to a boy.

And best of all, my river god shook hands with me and called me "partner".

That evening the salmon was placed upon the blue ashet in the hall, bearing a little card with its weight and my name upon it.

And I am afraid I sat on a chair facing it for ever so long, so that I could hear what the other anglers had to say as they passed by. I was sitting there when my colonel put his head out of his private sitting-room and beckoned me in.

"A true fisherman lives in the future, not the past, old man," said he; "though, for this once, it 'ud be a shame to reproach you."

"We got the fish," said he, "but we lost the rod, and the future without a rod doesn't bear thinking of

Now"—and he pointed at a long wooden box on the floor, that overflowed with rods of different sorts and sizes—"rummage among those. Take your time and see if you can find anything to suit you."

"Oo, sir," I said.

"Here, quit that," he ordered gruffly. "By Lord Bobs, if a show like this afternoon's don't deserve a medal, what does? Now, here's a handy piece by Hardy—a light and useful tool—or if you fancy greenheart in preference to split bamboo——"

I have the rod to this day, and I count it among my dearest treasures. And to this day I have a flick of the wrist that was his legacy. I have, too, some small skill in dressing flies, the elements of which were learned in his company by candlelight after the day's work was over. And I have countless memories of that month-long, month-short friendship—the closest and most perfect friendship, perhaps, of all my life.

He came to the station and saw me off.

How I vividly remember his shaggy head at the window, with the whiskered cheeks and the gun-powder marks at the corners of his eyes! I didn't cry, although I wanted to awfully. We were partners and shook hands. I never saw him again, although on my birthdays I would have coloured cards from him, with Irish, Scotch, Norwegian postmarks. Very brief they were: "Water very low." "Took a good fish last Thursday." "Been prawning, but don't like it."

Sometimes at Christmas I had gifts—a reel, a tapered line, a fly book. But I never saw him again.

Came at last no more post cards or gifts, but in the *Fishing Gazette*, of which I was a religious reader, was an obituary telling how one of the last of the Mutiny veterans had joined the great majority. It seems he had been fishing half an hour before he died.

So he was no more—my river god—and what was left to him they had put into a box and buried it in the earth.

But that isn't true; nor is it true that I never saw him again. For I seldom go a-fishing but that I meet him on the river banks.

The banks of a river are frequented by a strange company and are full of mysterious and murmurous sounds—the cluck and laughter of water, the piping of birds, the hum of insects, and the whispering of wind in the willows. What should prevent a man in such a place having a word and speech with another who is not there? So much of fishing lies in imagination, and mine needs little stretching to give my river god a living form.

“With this ripple,” says he, “you should do well.”

“And what's it to be,” say I—“Blue Upright, Red Spinner? What's your fancy, sir?”

Spirits never grow old. He has begun to take an interest in dry-fly methods—that river god of mine, with his seven-league boots, his shaggy head, and the gaff across his back.

By
THOMAS H. RADDALL



THE MAN FROM CAP D'AMOUR

“Caribou,” said Maling, who was fond of epigrams, “is where good wireless operators go when they die—and bad ones while they live.”

Dolly Hershman tied the lace of her skating-boot firmly and sat back in the chair under the switch-board, thrusting out her long legs with the confidence of a woman who knows they will bear inspection. “That sounds like a libel,” she said, running an approving eye over the high-laced boots and the stockings that vanished smoothly under her short pleated skirt.

“And a bit sacrilegious,” added MacOdrum with a smug look.

“I don’t like it either,” Mrs. Maling said vigorously. “Explain yourself.”

“Speakin’ professionally, sweetheart, professionally. Caribou is a wireless operator’s paradise, therefore I assume the good ones come here when they dot-an’-dash their last ‘SK’ upon this mortal coil. The bad ones, like the poor, we have with us always. Consider a moment. When a benign Government seized on Mr. Marconi’s astonishin’ invention back in 1904 the apparatus was crude an’ the range was short. So they

set up a flock of little stations about the shores of the Gulf an' upon the islands thereof as a brand-new aid to navigation. Government is sensitive about navigation in the Gulf. The St. Lawrence is the mouth of Canada, highly important to the digestive organs between Montreal an' Fort William."

"What does that make Vancouver?" demanded Blackburn, who was a West Coast man and sensitive about it.

"He sounds like a travelling medicine show," Mrs. Maling said tartly.

"Now, since the Gulf is ice-bound four or five months a year there's no point in keepin' all those wireless stations goin' in winter. Hence the hegira, a lot of high-spirited young Crusoes descendin' upon the peace of Montreal an' Halifax every Fall. What to do with 'em? That was a problem. Some could be laid off, true enough. But the wireless operator is a peculiar animal with rovin' instincts, an' findin' him again in spring—all of him—would have buffaloed Sherlock Holmes an' a whole army of Watsons. So they parked 'em for the winter at various all-year-round stations where they could make 'emself useful an' keep in practice. Now, down at this end of the Gulf there was a large fishin' population on the Millstones, cut off by ice all winter. Benign Government decided to keep the Millstones wireless station goin' the year around, which meant also a station on the mainland within range. Mark the finger of Destiny writin' Caribou on the map."

"Ancient history," yawned young Blackburn at the 'phones. He gave the crystal detector an expert rap, listened a moment, and scribbled an entry on the long yellow procès-verbal sheet.

"I'm sick of history," murmured Dolly Hershman, for she was a teacher at the Academy. "But don't consider my feelings."

"Now, Caribou had another geographical advantage. An easy rail journey to Halifax or Saint John——"

"Canada's great winter ports," boomed MacOdrum, striking a political pose, "ice-free the year around, through which the mighty commerce of this rising nation——"

"Where there is an intermittent demand for ship wireless operators. See the beauty of it? They could park some of the seasonal men at Caribou, sendin' 'em off to join ships whenever the need arose, or to coast stations in Nova Scotia for reliefs."

The door opened and more skaters came in from the ice under the aerial mast, bringing a blast of cold air. They tramped noisily on their skates towards the stove, tearing off gloves and warming their hands. Joram and Parrish were wireless operators. Ruth Boland was the daughter of a Caribou merchant, Isobel M'Rae another teacher from the Academy, and there was a red-cheeked blonde girl known for some obscure reason as Jimsie. They said "Brrrrr" and "Gosh, my feet are cold", and then, noticing Maling's pipe still waving in mid-air, paused politely.

"What's this?" demanded Jimsie. "A game?"

"A game," Blackburn said. "The boss is playing charades."

"And the answer," Mrs. Maling said, "is a lemon. Go on, darling."

Her husband put the pipe in his teeth with a snap. "The answer is a lot of brash undisciplined youngsters driftin' through Caribou every winter, an' Satan findin' mischief still for idle hands to do. They can make dots an' dashes. They can make a fist at repairs. They can read magazines half the night watch"—looking at Joram—"an' doze the rest"—this to Parrish—"an' turn in a log-sheet in the mornin' as plausible as gospel. But they haven't the responsibility of a Labrador pup. That's why I say all the bad operators come to Caribou. Sometimes I think I'm runnin' a kindergarten. It was different in the old days. Now when I was at Cape Torrent in 1908——"

"There were giants in those days," murmured Mrs. Maling.

"But see how you've improved your position," urged Isobel M'Rae. "Here you are, temporary Saint Peter of a temporary heaven for wireless operators. That makes you enormously important to the love-lorn gals of Caribou." Dolly Hershman threw a red wool mitten at her. "Bella, please! Have you no shame? And while we're on the subject, Saint Peter, I'd like to point out that Paradise is going to the dogs. There hasn't been a new operator for two weeks."

"Only night before last," Art Joram said pensively, "at the Hockey Club Dance, she looked in my eyes an' said she'd love me for ever."

"The ravenous women of Caribou," observed Parrish, a cynic of twenty-one, "are a tradition up the Gulf."

Maling tapped the pipe on his boot. "I do my best, girls, but I have to take things as they come. As a matter of fact there's a new operator on his way from Cap D'Amour, but you won't like him at all. He's a son of Hamish MacNeill, the operator in charge up there."

"Cap D'Amour," repeated Jimsie. "Sounds very nice."

"And very misleading," Mrs. Maling said. "The early French explorers had a lot of fun naming points along the coast. Just a succession of black crags and barren hills, and the worse they look the better the name: Belle Isle, Point Riche, Bonne Bay, Cap D'Amour—just a lot of Norman jokes that sound very flat after two or three centuries. But these MacNeills, darling; isn't there something I've heard—MacNeill, MacNeill—Cap D'Amour——?"

"They're a legend," Maling said. "Hamish MacNeill went up there when they built the station in 1904 and he's been there ever since, raising a family of red-headed boys. It's a wild inaccessible place, an' the only human life they see is the lighthouse staff an' once a year the crew of a supply steamer. There used to be two other operators, but MacNeill taught his

boys the business, an' Cap D'Amour's been a family affair since the war broke out. This is the oldest boy; somewhere about nineteen, I think; a great red-headed gawk, I fancy, with rock moss in his hair an' bake-apples growin' out of his ears."

Isobel M'Rae wrinkled her nose. "Probably thinks a foxtrot is something to do with fur-trapping." Jimmie stood up on her skates, tucked her lower lip inside her mouth, and gave a one-minute sketch of a gawk from Cap D'Amour.

"You mean to say he's never seen a woman?" Dolly Hershman said incredulously.

"His mother, that's all," Maling said. "He was about four when the MacNeills went up there. Been holdin' down a watch at Cap D'Amour since operators got scarce in the early days of the war. It's an all-year-round station—heaven knows why."

"This," MacOdrum mused, "is goin' to be fun."

"Fun," agreed the girls.

Hennessy, MacOdrum, Ishway, and Blackburn met the newcomer at the railway station. They had to wait until midnight; for the Caribou hockey team had gone to play at Starborough accompanied by a large crowd of supporters, and the return journey always delayed the train. It came rocking into the station at last and stopped in a cloud of steam and a great whistling of air-brakes. The Caribou players jumped to the platform in a swarm of yelling citizens and moved off with song. The wireless committee of

welcome, huddled in the lee of a freight shed, saw nothing of a red-headed gawk from Cap D'Amour. The jubilation of Caribou died away towards Main Street, and a frosty silence hung over the train. They went aboard to investigate and found a young man sitting calmly by the stove in an empty second-class carriage. He was well over six feet tall, with a girlish complexion and a swollen eye rapidly turning black.

"You the fella from Cap. D'Amour?" Ishway said.

The tall young man stood up. "I am," he said precisely. "Who are you?"

"We," MacOdrum said, "are the fellas from Caribou. Why didn't you get off the train?" He called off names and they shook hands all round.

"I wanted to be sure," said the man from Cap D'Amour. "They said Caribou was at the end of the line, so I waited a while."

"Where'd you get the shiner?" demanded Hennessy.

The tall young man put up a hand and prodded his eye in a gingerly way. "There were a lot of people having a noisy time in the other carriage. There seemed to be a celebration. Some of them had been drinking, I think. Some of them got to fighting. They broke two of the train windows. One fellow asked me where I was going, and I told him the wireless station at Caribou, and he hit me in the eye."

"What did you do?" blurted Hennessy. He was Irish and blood-thirsty.

"I got up and went into the second-class carriage. It was quiet in here. There was a squaw smoking a pipe and spitting at the stove."

The delegation regarded each other in silence. "Let me get this straight," MacOdrum said patiently. "You said you were goin' to the wireless station an' this guy hit you in the eye. Then—correct me if I'm missin' anything—you got up an' went into the second-class carriage. Right?"

"Right," said young MacNeill. "I've been told about that kind of thing. No gentleman lets himself get mixed up in a brawl."

"Who told you that?" gasped Hennessy.

"My mother."

"You're a credit to her," MacOdrum said heavily. "Where's your baggage?"

Next morning Maling sat the newcomer in the operator's chair and explained the apparatus in simple words and at great length. He had received the report of the welcome committee and feared the worst. At last he said, "Have I made it clear?"

"Yes, sir."

Maling coughed. He could not remember being addressed as 'Sir' in fifteen hard-bitten years. "Any questions you'd like to ask?" he said kindly.

MacNeill slid a 'phone off his left ear. "Well, nothing much, sir. It's queer old stuff, isn't it? I thought these ten-inch coil sets were used only for emergency apparatus aboard ship. I guess they're

not much good for anything else. On a coast station! Fancy that!"

"It was good stuff in 1904 when this station was built," Maling said defensively. "Caribou's been passed by the march of time. Matter of fact, the station's usefulness is over. I don't think they'll open it another year. Millstone's got a new three-kilowatt transmitter an' he can make himself heard all over the Gulf."

"Yes," murmured the man from Cap D'Amour in his precise way. "We've talked to them from Cap D'Amour. I guess the time is coming when most of the Gulf stations will be closed down or turned into direction-finders. They're putting out receivers now with vacuum-tube detectors and amplifiers, and you can sit and listen to the whole world. No need for these little short-range stations any more. Your battery-charging outfit—that's interesting. Rectifying the town's account with a vacuum tube. A lot better than running a big gasoline engine and dynamo like we had to do at Cap D'Amour."

"Where'd you learn about vacuum tubes an' direction-finders?" Maling said curiously, for this was in 1919, when such things were still new.

MacNeill stirred in the chair. "Books," he said diffidently. "Father sent for all the latest technical books and magazines. We had little classes four times a week. That was in addition to Mom's school classes. I stopped in Halifax for a while after I got off the boat, and took my examinations for a first-class certi-

ificate. At the wireless office in the Navy Yard. The examining officer said he had to send the papers to Ottawa, but in the meantime I could consider myself passed by acclamation. What did he mean?"

"A new technical term, I fancy," Maling said hurriedly. "Find the exams. hard?"

"No. I was surprised. It was just a lot of old stuff. He examined me on a 1½-K.W. standard ship set—the old British type, with converter and fixed spark gap."

"Had you ever seen one before?"

"No, but I learned about it in Hawkhead and Dowsett's book. I took it all apart and put it together again. I wanted to dismantle the converter and show how to wind a new armature, but the officer said 'Good God, no', and passed on to the Postmaster-General's Regulations." He sat up alertly in the chair and settled the 'phones firmly over his ears. "Millstone's calling, sir. Asking QRU?"

"Tell him 'Yes'." Maling took a clip from the wall. "Here's a couple of day letters."

MacNeill threw the transmitting switches expertly, and the old-fashioned open spark leaped and crackled like a machine-gun. The messages were long. There was a cheap rate between Caribou and the Millstones for the benefit of people from the islands who wintered on the mainland. He finished and threw the send-receive switches. Across the silent room Maling could hear the whine of Millstone's transmitter in the 'phones. "'Send slower!'" uttered the man

from Cap D'Amour, surprised. He repeated the messages laboriously. As the crash of the blue electric snake subsided there was a hush, painful by sheer contrast, and Maling heard the curt "R. SK." from Millstone. MacNeill took his pencil and marked the time of transmission on the messages, made an entry on his log-sheet, and sat back in the chair, slipping the 'phone from his left ear. "Funny," he said. "The air is clear as a bell, but they couldn't get me the first time and asked me to send slower."

"Listen," Maling said. "I timed some of that first transmission by the clock. You were poundin' brass at somethin' like thirty words a minute. Those day letters were in French full of family names an' bits of *patois*. This plain-aerial spark makes a sound in the other fella's 'phones like somebody tearin' a shirt. Have a heart. Just because you've pounded a brass key since you were old enough to learn the alphabet, you mustn't think you've got to show off your speed. Some day an old hand will get you on the receivin' end an' roast your ears off."

The man from Cap D'Amour sat up stiffly. "I wasn't showing off, sir. That's my normal speed. I made errors in that repeat because I'm not used to sending slow."

Maling gave him a hard look. The black eye made a caricature of the recruit's right profile, but from the left his face was handsome. The long sweep of his jaw was just saved from ruthlessness by a deep cleft in the chin, but he had the fresh complexion of a girl.

His visible eye was large and a very dark brown, a soulful eye. His mouth was wide, the upper lip moulded in fine curves such as women achieve by pencil marks, and his teeth were square and white. It came to Maling as a revelation that the man from Cap D'Amour was the answer to almost any maiden's prayer; and because he did not look for beauty in his operators and indeed disliked extreme good looks in any man, the next thought popped into his mind with a fitness little short of diabolical.

"Do you skate, MacNeill?"

"Yes, sir. Very well."

"Play hockey?"

"Hockey? We never had enough for a team at Cap D'Amour. We used to fool around with sticks and a puck, though, my brothers and the lighthouse men. I guess you'd call it pretty crude. But Dad taught us the fine points. You've got enough for a team here, haven't you?"

Maling nodded. "We've got a schedule with the town team, too. Caribou at present is a sort of clearing-house for spare operators, so our team changes rapidly; but we've managed to keep our end up. There's quite a rivalry. The Caribou girls seem to like wireless operators, which adds to the fun."

MacNeill frowned. "What's that got to do with it?"

Maling gave him another hard look, but the recruit's face was innocent. "Let it go. The point is, we've got a game on next week, an' Ishway's a bit

lame. Got a hard body check into the boards in our last game. What position d'you play?"

"Oh, anything. I'm not a bad goal-tender. I can play a pretty fair game on defence, too. But if I had my choice, I guess I'd rather play right wing."

"Good!" Maling's voice was grim. "The boys are going down to the rink this afternoon for practice, so you'd better plan to go along. Got skates?"

"Oh yes, sir!"

When Maling repeated this conversation to his wife she bristled at once. "Pete! don't you dare let that boy play against Town. They'll kill him. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Maling set his jaw defiantly. "He's too cocky, darlin'. About everything. Needs takin' down a peg or two. They'll knock some of the stuffin' out of him. Good for him."

Hennessy's reaction was like Mrs. Maling's. "Say! That pretty boy won't last a minute. It'll be murder. Listen! Somebody smacked him on the train an'——"

"I know, I know. Nevertheless, Mick, he plays next week. He's six-foot-one an' healthy, an' it's time he learned there isn't any Santa Claus. He wants to play right wing."

Hennessy shrugged. "Well, it's his funeral, not mine. But he won't play long, Pete. The Town bunch are mostly just outa the army, an' they play like they were still hustlin' Fritz along the road to Mons. Bayonet drill has given 'em some fancy new ideas about a hockey stick. Besides, the crowd likes rough stuff."

Maling went down to the rink in the afternoon and watched Hennessy put the team through their paces. A number of Caribou idlers joined him at the boards. The man from Cap D'Amour played very well. He moved like the wind, using a good choppy stride; his stick-handling was good, his pass shots were well timed, and his goal shots hard and accurate. Hennessy, at the goal, found himself sprawling, diving, and exerting all his tricks to keep the puck out of the net. When they paused for a spell, Hennessy skated over to the boards, his short legs muffled in goal-tender's pads. He was grinning. "What d'ye think of him, Pete?"

"Not bad. But anybody can do that stuff with no opposition. What's your idea?"

Hennessy rested his arms on the boards and wrinkled his snub nose. "You said it. He plays like a perfect gentleman, if you get what I mean. One hoist from those gorillas on the Town defence an' he'll be listenin' to the birdies. We got to pray for Ishway's ankle. He's our only spare unless some more ops drift in."

In the bungalow on the hill Mrs. Maling admitted a breathless troop of girls. They draped themselves over the furniture, flinging skating-boots on the floor, and burst into voice.

"One at a time," Mrs. Maling said crisply. "What do you think of the gawk from Cap D'Amour?"

Jimsie had the grace to blush. "There's only one word. He's divine."

"Did you ever see a boy so good-looking?" demanded Dolly Hershman.

"And," moaned Bella M'Rae, "he's never been anywhere and doesn't know anything, the darling! Where's he been all my life? When I look at him I feel funny all over."

"He's really handsome," said Ruth Boland, the sedate one. "And he has the quaintest old-fashioned manners. We—happened—to be skating in the rink when the boys came down for practice, so we paired off for a few turns around the ice. Dolly, the hussy, got to him first."

Dolly rolled her large blue eyes. "My dear, you've no idea. At first he wouldn't touch me. And when I pointed out Bella and Art Joram, and Ruth waltzing with Bob MacOdrum, he drew in a deep breath like a swimmer heading into cold water and put his arm around my waist as if it were a roll of barbed wire. Darling, I could have screamed! When I slid my arm around his waist he shuddered like a fly-bitten horse. He went three times around the rink with me, wearing a we-who-are-about-to-die expression and then dropped me like a hot brick when Hennessy came on wearing his goal pads. It was too delicious. And that black eye!"

Jimsie's mouth was set firmly. "We might as well have everything open and above-board. I want to say here and now that I saw him first."

"Nonsense!" Dolly Hershman said. "My arm was around his waist when you others were gasping for breath. That gives me a first mortgage."

"Pooh!" poohed Isobel M'Rae. "Anyone could see you scared him out of his wits. The poorest technique I ever saw. And his hair goes so nicely with my new sweater."

"I think," Ruth Boland said in her slow warm voice, "you'd better leave him to me. You're all in too much of a rush. You frighten him. If he's got to learn about women he might as well learn quietly. I'm a perfectly nice girl and I'm sure his mother would approve of me. I think I'll teach him to dance, first."

"That," Mrs. Maling observed with approval, "is a perfectly nice way for a perfectly nice girl to get a perfectly nice man's arms around her. First, though, you'd better learn to sing 'The Flowers of the Forest', all of you. Pete's putting him in as right wing against Town next Friday night. He'll make a beautiful corpse."

The babel of protest still echoed plaintively in the little parlour when Maling walked in to face the wifely music.

The week passed pleasantly enough. There was strenuous daily practice in the Town rink. There was a sleigh drive, a moonlight snow-shoe hike, and a tobogganing party, each of which ended in the warmth and glow of a Caribou home with noise and refreshments. In all of them the man from Cap D'Amour was a cynosure. He had smitten feminine Caribou like a new and feverish disease. Flappers paused and stared after him, goggle-eyed, on the street. Old ladies backed him into parlour chairs and asked kindly after

that perfect stranger, his mother, and remembered gustily the days of their youth. The more eligible females buzzed about him like flies. When they found he could not dance and would not try, they sat out with him in relays on the stairs. He had no stock of small talk and understood very little of theirs, but they found him keen on his work and drew him on that, listening with rapt faces while his eager baritone explained inductance, rheostats, condensers, electro-motive force, and the theory of the Heaviside layer. When he appeared in church on Sunday morning he was conducted to a front pew, and the young ladies of the choir, facing him from high stalls under the palisade of organ pipes, rolled soulful eyes to the roof and chanted the anthem at him like a personal hymn of praise; and after the service the minister's wife invited him to teach a class at Sunday School, which, with great embarrassment, he declined.

The young men of the town regarded him with puzzled hate. They knew the episode of the train in all its shameful detail, and they had various appropriate names for a young man who would not smoke, drink, or fight, who referred openly to his mother as 'Mom', and was rumoured to be in the habit of saying his prayers every night. But somehow these terms did not fit a man who stood six feet in his socks, turned flying somersaults on snow-shoes, and skated like a bullet. He should have lisped in a treble key, but his voice had a hard ring like a steel rail under the section-man's hammer. He should have had fluttering lids and

downcast eyes in the presence of men and an assured dancing-master manner in the company of women; but he looked men straight in the eye like a child and was uneasy and diffident with girls. Maling, who had seen him pick up a 250-pound condenser with ease, informed an astonished barber's shop that the man from Cap D'Amour was 'strong as a bull moose'. The young men went about with bewildered frowns, and told each other darkly that there would be an open hunting season in the rink on Friday night.

Maling went down to the rink on the fateful night full of guilt. Ishway, his ankle bandaged under the long wool stockings, sat at the 'phones in the wireless station in full panoply—padded shorts, sweater, boots, and skates. It was agreed that Maling should run up in a car and take over the watch if his services were needed. Ordinarily the crowd for Wireless-versus-Town games was small, because wireless teams were always scratch crews, often dependent on town men for substitutes, and the scores were one-sided. Tonight the rink was packed. The long plank seats groaned under a mass of rugs and humanity, and the standing-room behind was rapidly filling up. Tobacco smoke curled upward from the packed tiers and joined an increasing cloud under the rafters. There was something savage in the roar of conversation that filled the place.

"It's like a——" Mrs. Maling paused. She was going to say 'bull-fight', but that seemed inadequate. "It's like one of those old Roman arenas, Pete."

Maling nodded grimly. "Yeah. An' here's the Early Christian."

The Wireless team came on the ice amid shouts, whistles, and applause. Their sweaters were shabby relics of obscure teams in which they had played. Hennessy's was blue, with 'Glac Bay Wolves' in white letters; Joram's red and green said 'Halifax Hurricanes'; Parrish wore a simple and ambiguous 'Montreal'; and MacOdrum, who had joined an infantry battalion in Canada before transferring to the field telegraphs, announced 'Seventy-fifth'. The sweaters of young Blackburn and MacNeill were unadorned. The overhead lights struck bright gleams of bronze from MacNeill's bare head. A male voice, pitched in a pseudo-feminine key, cried, "Oh, you kid with the red hair!" and everybody laughed. The Town team appeared in a tumult of approval. They wore white sweaters with broad red stripes, and looked very large and confident.

"Who's the referee?" demanded Mrs. Maling.

Her husband stretched his short neck and did some bobbing and twisting. "Skid Lepreau and—ah-hah! —Bucky MacDonald."

Mrs. Maling pursed her lips and glared. "I thought so. It's deliberate. Lepreau wears a pair of mental blinkers and Bucky MacDonald simply loves a fight on the ice. The man's notorious."

"Aw now, sweetheart. He's just broad-minded, that's all."

She caught sight of Dolly Hershman, Bella M'Rae,

Jimsie, and the Boland girl sitting opposite centre ice, and stood up, waving. They saw her and fluttered their hands, pointing to the burly figure of Bucky MacDonald and rolling their eyes towards the rafters.

The teams faced off. Bucky MacDonald, barrel-chested and important in white sweater and cap, dropped the puck and skated aside. Play began with a clatter of sticks and a tangle of scrambling forwards. From this tangle the puck shot suddenly over the Wireless blue line, and Joram and MacOdrum moved promptly to meet it. There was another scramble as they met the Town forwards in hot pursuit, with Blackburn, Parrish, and MacNeill back-skating rapidly to join battle. The puck, lost for a moment in flying ice-dust and a whirl of gleaming skates, appeared outside the *mêlée*, a lonely black dot. It was a tempting shot to the Wireless goal, where Hennessy waited tensely, trying to make himself as large as possible in the vulnerable side of his cage. The crowd yelled. Four players thrust at it, sticks clashing. The puck moved a few feet towards the boards and stopped again. This time five sticks scooped at it hungrily and it went clear, and young Blackburn pounced on it and fled up the ice, followed by the pack. MacNeill flew up along the right boards for a pass, but the Town defence men stopped Blackburn's rush, and their centre player, hook-checking smartly, rapped the puck towards the left boards, where it bounced and disappeared in a flurry of wildly ducking spectators.

The teams settled down. The forward lines from

time to time broke away towards the opposing goal, but seldom got past the defence for a hard shot. Joram and MacOdrum were playing a stout game on the Wireless defence. Blackburn at left wing and Parrish at centre did very well against the heavier Town forwards. The man from Cap D'Amour was the doubtful quantity. At times his speed was brilliant, his stick-handling was good, and he could rush the puck without yielding to that amiable weakness of amateur forwards, the thrill of a lone attack. But his play generally was erratic. Maling put it down to lack of experience in team play. His wife, with feminine instinct, diagnosed it more accurately as plain stage fright. At the end of the first period the score board was blank. The Town goalie had stopped eight shots, Hennessy twelve. As the players trooped off the ice, Maling relaxed.

"See, sweetheart? You got the boys all wrong. Good clean play throughout, no trippin' an' very little body checkin'. Why, it's positively dull."

"Wait and see," his wife said ominously. She wriggled her chilled feet inside the heavy black overshoes and wished she had brought another rug.

The game went into the second period in the same gentlemanly scramble. This time the Town forwards carried the puck away, working a perfect three-man combination. MacNeill, back-skating like a demon, swung in towards the Town centre and poke-checked shrewdly. Centre feinted a left pass. The man from Cap D'Amour made a lightning sweep to block it. At

the same moment he backed into Joram, and as they sprawled, MacNeill's stick went between the legs of the Town centre. The man fell heavily, followed in quick succession by Blackburn, Parrish, and Town's right wing, who were skating in at speed. The crowd stood up with a single motion as the human heap untangled, and saw the Town centre, a popular man named Muir, lying inert on the ice. He was carried off awkwardly by a trio of rink attendants and Caribou's one-man police force, and Bucky MacDonald waved MacNeill off the ice for a major penalty. At once the crowd broke into cat-calls. The man from Cap D'Amour stood uncertainly for a moment and then followed the direction of MacDonald's jerking thumb towards the penalty box. He stood there like a prisoner at the bar, surrounded by a booing chorus, and his amazement gave place slowly to a deep blush that spread up to the roots of his tousled hair.

"Accident!" Maling objected. His voice was lost in the uproar. So was a shrill chorus of "No fair! No fair!" from utterly biased feminine voices all over the benches.

"It looked bad, just the same," Mrs. Maling said reluctantly.

Town substituted a gaunt rangy man at centre, and play was resumed. The Wireless team, one man short, promptly found itself on the defensive. There was some body checking, in which Joram and Bob MacOdrum joined readily, but nothing bad enough to warrant interference from the referees. Sticks were

carried higher, though, and elbows were suddenly prominent. Maling noted these ominous signs and glanced at his wife. She was looking at her watch, timing MacNeill's penalty. The Wireless team fought a delaying action, but Town was not to be denied. Hennessy performed brilliant antics in his cage, stopped a barrage of shots, but twice there was a flurry in front of the goal and a puck that appeared in the corner of the net as if by magic. The second was an absurd rolling shot, and Hennessy looked sheepish as the crowd cheered.

When MacNeill resumed his place he was booed again vigorously. The team took up the attack again in good heart. Parrish caught a loose puck and got into his stride, with MacNeill racing up the right ice for a pass. Town's right wing, at Parrish's heels, hooked the puck nicely. MacNeill, coming in fast, met the heavy Town defence men. They caught him between them and swung their shoulders together in that bruising operation known as 'the hoist'. It was legitimate but deliberate. MacNeill picked himself up quickly, wiping ice-dust from his face, and plunged back to join the play. Then a remarkably accidental skate caught his own in mid-career and he took a header, sliding along on his chest.

"They're roughing him," Mrs. Maling hissed. Maling watched a stick-butt connect with MacNeill's ribs and thought of Hennessy on bayonet drill. Soon the man from Cap D'Amour was white from head to foot with ice-dust. Town ran up another goal as the

period closed, and Maling went down to comfort a grim team.

"The party's gettin' rough," Hennessy grinned.

"Givin' as good as we get, though," Joram said stoutly.

"They're pickin' on the kid," Hennessy said. "Maybe you better run up for Ishway. Talk the kid into callin' it a night."

Maling walked over to MacNeill and turned his back on the rest of the team.

"Listen, son. You've played a good game for your first appearance, but there's a time to quit, an' this is it. I'll put Ishway on defence an' send Joram up to right wing in your place." MacNeill said nothing for a moment. His left cheek was swelling and a thin trickle ran like a red pencil mark from a cut on his forehead.

He blurted, "Look here, sir. They're not playing hockey at all."

"Sure, sure," Maling soothed. "Now Ishway's used to this kind of play—and——"

"They're playing just the way father told me not to play!"

Maling paused. "What d'you mean, son?"

"Well, up at Cap D'Amour father'd get us all down on the pond back of the wireless station and show us the right way. Then some days, when Mom was busy at the house, he'd take us down and show us how not to play. It was kind of fun, for a change. We were all big strong boys and we could take it. So could father."

Maling's eyes widened. "You mean high-stickin'?"

"And tripping."

"Body checkin'? Elbowin'?"

"Yes. And how to rush the puck and jump into the air straight at the defence-man and make him drop aside to avoid your skates."

"Phew! Anything else?"

"Yes. He showed me how to swing a fist so as to get all the speed of my skating into it."

"What did your mother say?"

"Well, I don't think she liked it very much. The day I blacked father's eye and young Ian got a sprained ankle, she said she guessed father would never outgrow his Cape Breton upbringing."

"An' what did father say to that?"

"He said it was more blessed to give than to receive sometimes, and an old Highland custom."

Maling put hands in overcoat pocket and rocked back and forth on heel and toes, meditatively. "Son, this is interestin'. Did Hamish MacNeill, by any chance, tell you 'When in Rome, play your hockey Roman style'?"

MacNeill regarded him with surprised brown eyes. "Rome? Why, I never knew they——"

"Let it go, son; let it go. I was thinkin' of arenas an' Early Christians, I guess. The point is, the local boys are moppin' up the ice with your gentlemanly person. The point is, I'm afraid you're goin' to get hurt."

"I can take it!" snapped the man from Cap D'Amour. There was a glow in the dark eyes.

"Sure! But I can't. Conscience doth make cowards of us all. I've got a conscience named Helena A. Maling, an' it's gonna hurt me plenty if the boys hurt you."

MacNeill's eyes were like molten bronze now. There were red glints. "You talk in riddles, sir. Do you mean I should play hockey the way father taught me not to play just because these fellows got a little rough?"

"That's the general idea, son."

"Very well." The man from Cap D'Amour breathed deeply. "But you understand, sir, it isn't quite fair. I mean, these fellows never knew father."

The bell rang. Maling choked and tottered back to his seat.

"Pete, you're still playing that boy!" said the Voice of Conscience.

"Sweetheart," he confessed, "curiosity got the best of me."

The final period opened smartly with the Town forwards breaking away in a smooth combination. Centre, poke-checked furiously by Parrish and Blackburn, passed to Right Wing. MacOdrum and Joram moved up slowly to meet Right Wing, who passed to Left Wing, a quick clean shot across the ice. MacNeill, back-skating like a whirlwind, bumped Left Wing hard and hooked busily. Left Wing rapped the puck against the boards, eluded MacNeill with a passing elbow-thrust for good measure, picked up the rubber again on the rebound, and headed for the

Wireless goal through the wide-open defence. The crowd came to its feet roaring, while Hennessy performed the quaint bear dance of a goalie facing a terrific shot at close quarters. At this point the man from Cap D'Amour appeared to trip. He came down on one knee and then slid headlong, arms out-thrust, and the tip of his stick pulled Left Wing's skate from under him. It was neatly timed and executed. Left Wing fell, thrusting out gloved hands to break the force of his descent. Hennessy cleared the puck easily, even nonchalantly, and a second later Left Wing slid into the cage on his chest. A wit in the stands shouted "Goal!" and there was a laugh from that quarter. There were shouts of "Penalty!" from seats near the boards, but the referees had noticed nothing.

There followed some jockeying near the Wireless blue line. Then Parrish broke away with the puck, received a stiff body check, and went down, scooping the rubber blindly towards right ice. MacNeill was at his post, travelling fast. He caught the puck neatly and rushed for the Town goal. The heavy Town defence appeared like Nemesis before him, skating slowly towards him. The stage was set for another 'hoist', and a brutal one, for the man from Cap D'Amour was racing at top speed. Mrs. Maling closed her eyes. She did not see MacNeill leap high in air. She missed the startled looks of the defence men, their instinctive dives to avoid the oncoming skates, and the presence of mind with which they tried to hook the flyer's feet with their sticks. She did see

MacNeill make a perfect landing, flipping the puck to the left, where young Blackburn promptly shot it home. The Town goalie had moved out to meet MacNeill, and a high shot to the corner caught him flat-footed. She was astonished to hear the crowd cheering, for her opinion of a Caribou hockey crowd was low. Maling was rubbing his hands.

Play resumed with a rising tempo. Hard body checks became a commonplace. Sticks were carried higher and so were tempers. MacNeill was in the thick of it. Things happened wherever he went. In his astonishing metamorphosis the experts perceived a certain deadly science which gave more punishment than it took. And the crowd loved it. They had come to see an execution: they were seeing a one-man riot. Caribou liked its hockey rough.

The referees hesitated. Skid Lepreau saw things in spite of his mental blinkers. A quiet easy-going man, he had sensed the injustice of MacNeill's penalty in the second period, and he believed in the compensation of errors. Bucky MacDonald, an old hockey player who had never asked or given quarter in his own day, believed that frequent whistling made a dull game. These consonant beliefs ignored the fact that the man from Cap D'Amour was running amuck. The Town players, aroused, began to seek him out with vengeful purpose, and in this amiable distraction Parrish and the speedy Blackburn found profit, rushing the Town goal again and again. The goalie performed miracles. Presently, inevitably, a shot went

home. The crowd cheered, and went on yelling as the Wireless forwards strove for another to even the score. MacNeill redoubled his efforts. Players went down in mutual disaster, arose, and scattered after the puck, met and fell again. In the tangled heaps of white-powdered men fists worked busily with short stiff jabs too quick and too vague for even-handed justice from the referees. Lepreau frowned and MacDonald glared, but they were helpless. Finally a heap disintegrated near the left boards with fists flying openly. Sticks were dropped. Ten men smote and slithered in a fierce ecstasy, while the two goalies looked upon the fight with longing eyes and stared at each other down the length of the rink. Bucky MacDonald sailed into the mêlée, whistle in teeth, blowing furiously. In the midst of it raged the man from Cap D'Amour. His bronze locks were wet with sweat and melted ice-dust. His large eyes burned. His fists shot out with speed and accuracy. The referee thrust a purple face at him, whistled at him shrilly, and swiftly MacNeill's busy knuckles came up. There was no malice about it. He was striking out impartially at a shifting ring of hostile faces, and the new face suffered with the rest.

War is a contagious thing. The ice was suddenly populated by men pouring out of the stands, eager to smite somebody, anybody. Wary wives and sweet-hearts seized their companions and dragged them away from that seductive spectacle. The game broke up in mass disorder. Through the aggressive assembly

waded Caribou's police force, a giant man in blue, leaving a sort of armed peace in his wake. The word passed before him. "John Angus! Here's John Angus!" He came to the centre of the battle like an ambulatory Gibraltar. The warring players stumbled apart, grinning sheepishly.

"Boys," rumbled John Angus calmly, "I guess that'll be all for to-night."

In the bare little dressing-room MacNeill put off his skate-boots with a gesture of disgust. The room was full of people talking furiously and patting him on the back. He was silent and unappreciative, and once he wriggled his shoulders in a shuddering almost feminine way, as if the touch of strange hands were distasteful. As he put on his overcoat he spoke. "Out of my way, you! I've got to relieve Ishway."

"Here's with you, son," Maling said. They walked up the hill in silence, Mrs. Maling between them, and found a grim young man at the 'phones perspiring in hockey kit. Ishway ignored MacNeill's battered face. He thrust a message form at Maling and said—

"Read that!"

Mrs. Maling recognised the narrow, canary-yellow service form, used for official business. "Bad news?" she blurted, eyes very wide.

"For somebody!" Ishway said meaningly. Maling studied the pencilled words.

"Well?" cried his wife.

"Send operator immediately Cape Rip. Supply ship sails from Halifax to-morrow night. This post

requires fast operator with thorough experience shore station work. Acknowledge.' ”

He read it aloud slowly and looked up.

“ What’s bad about that? ” Mrs. Maling said.

Ishway breathed heavily through his nostrils. “ Everything! It’s like transportation for life. A barren pile of rock, the loneliest station on the coast. Once they get you there, nothing but death or a writ of habeas corpus will ever set you free.”

“ Let’s see,” Maling said slowly. “ Parrish? Blackburn? Hennessy? None of these boys can handle a fast wire. That leaves it up to you, Joram or MacOdrum.”

“ I,” said Ishway thickly, “ spent three years up there, which is plenty for one man’s lifetime. I got away on the flat of my back with ptomaine poisoning. You can count Joram out, too. He came here from a ship with no previous shore station experience.” He looked up at the ancient apparatus and smiled grimly. “ You can’t get ‘ thorough experience ’ with this junk.”

“ What about MacOdrum? ”

“ All kinds of experience—including three years in France with a trench set. That’s just behind him. Mac wants to see some life.”

“ We can’t all do what we want,” Maling said levelly, “ even in these queer times.”

“ He’ll resign first,” Ishway said. “ So would I.”

Wise in his generation, Maling sighed. The colts must be gentled. Young men with a long war behind

them were in no mood for discipline of any sort. They did their work efficiently, and they liked Pete Maling because he was a good fellow, but they would not be ordered anywhere if they did not want to go. In another year or two perhaps, when this intoxicating freedom had grown stale—but in the meantime there were jobs to burn. Ships laid down under wartime building programmes were taking the water from every yard in North America. An operator with a first-class ticket could get a job anywhere, and in the States wages were high. Since the whole purpose in running this bull-pen at Caribou was to keep a supply of operators on hand, a sudden irruption of resignations would attract some cold notice from headquarters. Why, it would be asked, was Maling unable to get along with his men.

His wife, pretending to read a copy of 'Jack Canuck' in the corner, thought suddenly of young MacNeill. How nice that he was so inexperienced! He had just come out of the wilderness, and a return to it would mean the best years of his life wasted in desert air. There was something repellent about the mere thought. He was too fresh and burning, too utterly attractive, for a fate like that. In a perfectly virtuous way she was half in love with him. All the women of Caribou were in love with him. There was something about his monastic background that captured the feminine imagination: His good looks, his modesty, his athletic frame, his naïve mind, all added to the fascination, and his droll preference for the

society of men made him irresistible. Women were all eager, too eager, to be charming to him.

And the curious thing was that men liked him. They had come to the rink prepared to see him bumped into unconsciousness, had swarmed upon the ice howling for a chance to beat his head off, but they had gone away in reluctant admiration. That hard-fisted, hot-eyed passion on the ice had caught their respect, just as it stirred in respectable matrons and spinsters the most unaccountable yearnings. And apart from his physical charm were his rare intelligence and the unusual education hammered into it by that prim school-ma'am his mother. He would go far. The world lay at the feet of such a young man.

"I'll go," said young MacNeill.

"But you can't!" gasped Mrs. Maling.

"I've had a lifetime of experience," he added calmly. "I've passed for a first-class ticket. I can send and receive at thirty words a minute and keep it up all day. I've heard Cape Rip a thousand times, and I can say without boasting that I'm as good as any operator they've got."

It was the perfect solution to Maling's problem. He opened his mouth to take up the young idiot before something changed his mind, but Mrs. Maling caught his eye. He hesitated a moment, licking his lips.

"Look here, MacNeill. You don't want to go up there. It's worse than Cap D'Amour."

MacNeill stiffened. "What's wrong with Cap D'Amour?"

"What's wrong with Caribou?" demanded Mrs. Maling. She was getting angry. "Do you realise every girl in the place is mad about you? Is it possible you don't know that women, women everywhere, are ready to grovel at the feet of a man like you? Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

MacNeill regarded her with puzzled resentment. "You're joking, Mrs. Maling. But women are the trouble—saving your presence, ma'am. There are too many. I never—my mother told me to keep away from women, but how can I when the world is full of them? She told me not to use my fists on other men, too, and I've been brawling. I want to go to Cape Rip and kind of sort myself out."

"Haven't you any ambition?" Mrs. Maling said. It was incredible.

"Yes," said the man from Cap D'Amour. "I want to be the best operator on the coast."

Maling pursed his lips, raised his eyebrows, and shrugged. Under the sardonic eyes of Ishway he reached for a service message pad and scrawled the fateful words. His wife sank back in the shabby arm-chair and closed her eyes. Whatever the future held for the young god from Cap D'Amour, it was clear that Peter Maling was in for an uncomfortable night.

By
E. Æ. SOMERVILLE and
MARTIN ROSS



PHILIPPA'S FOX-HUNT

NO-one can accuse Philippa and me of having married in haste. As a matter of fact, it was but little under five years from that autumn evening on the river when I had said what is called in Ireland "the hard word," to the day in August when I was led to the altar by my best man, and was subsequently led away from it by Mrs. Sinclair Yeates. About two years out of the five had been spent by me at Shreelane in ceaseless warfare with drains, eaveshoots, chimneys, pumps; all those fundamentals, in short, that the ingenuous and improving tenant expects to find established as a basis from which to rise to higher things. As far as rising to higher things went, frequent ascents to the roof to search for leaks summed up my achievements; in fact, I suffered so general a shrinkage of my ideals that the triumph of making the hall-door bell ring blinded me to the fact that the rat-holes in the hall-floor were nailed up with pieces of tin biscuit boxes, and that the casual visitor could, instead of leaving a card, have easily written his name in the damp on the walls.

Philippa, however, proved adorably callous to these and similar shortcomings. She regarded Shreelane and its floundering, foundering menage of incapables in the light of a gigantic picnic in a foreign land; she held long conversations daily with Mrs. Cadogan, in order, as she informed me, to acquire the language; without any ulterior domestic intention she engaged kitchen-maids because of the beauty of their eyes, and housemaids because they had such delightfully picturesque old mothers, and she declined to correct the phraseology of the parlour-maid, whose painful habit it was to whisper "Do ye choose cherry or clarry?" when proffering the wine. Fast-days, perhaps, afforded my wife her first insight into the sterner realities of Irish housekeeping. Philippa had what are known as High Church proclivities, and took the matter seriously.

"I don't know how we are to manage for the servants' dinner to-morrow, Sinclair," she said, coming in to my office one Thursday morning; "Julia says she 'promised God this long time that she wouldn't eat an egg on a fast-day', and the kitchen-maid says she won't eat herrings 'without they're fried with onions', and Mrs. Cadogan says she will 'not go to them extremes for servants'."

"I should let Mrs. Cadogan settle the menu herself," I suggested.

"I asked her to do that," replied Philippa, "and she only said she 'thanked God *she* had no appetite!'"

The lady of the house here fell away into unseasonable laughter.

I made the demoralising suggestion that, as we were going away for a couple of nights, we might safely leave hem to fight it out, and the problem was abandoned.

Philippa had been much called on by the neighbourhood in all its shades and grades, and daily she and her trousseau frocks presented themselves at hall-doors of varying dimensions in due acknowledgment of civilities. In Ireland, it may be noted, the process known in England as "summering and wintering" a new comer does not obtain; sociability and curiosity alike forbid delay. The visit to which we owed our escape from the intricacies of the fast-day was to the Knoxes of Castle Knox, relations in some remote and tribal way of my landlord, Mr. Flurry, M. F.H. of that ilk. It involved a short journey by train, and my wife's longest basket-trunk; it also, which was more serious, involved my being lent a horse to go out cubbing the following morning.

At Castle Knox we sank into an almost forgotten environment of draught-proof windows and doors, of deep carpets, of silent servants instead of clattering belligerents. Philippa told me afterwards that it had only been by an effort that she had restrained herself from snatching up the train of her wedding-gown as she paced across the wide hall on little Sir Valentine's arm. After three weeks at Shreelane she found it difficult to remember that the floor was neither damp nor dusty.

I had the good fortune to be of the limited number of those who got on with Lady Knox, chiefly, I imagine, because I was as a worm before her, and thankfully permitted her to do all the talking.

"Your wife is extremely pretty," she pronounced autocratically, surveying Philippa between the candle-shades; "does she ride?"

Lady Knox was a short square lady, with a weather-beaten face, and an eye decisive from long habit of taking her own line across country and elsewhere. She would have made a very imposing little coachman, and would have caused her stable helpers to rue the day they had the presumption to be born; it struck me that Sir Valentine sometimes did so.

"I'm glad you like her looks," I replied, "as I fear you will find her thoroughly despicable otherwise; for one thing, she not only can't ride, but she believes that I can!"

"Oh come, you're not as bad as all that!" my hostess was good enough to say; "I'm going to put you up on Sorcerer to-morrow, and we'll see you at the top of the hunt—if there is one. That young Knox hasn't a notion how to draw these woods."

"Well, the best run we had last year out of this place was with Flurry's hounds," struck in Miss Sally, sole daughter of Sir Valentine's house and home, from her place half-way down the table. It was not difficult to see that she and her mother held different views on the subject of Mr. Flurry Knox.

"I call it a criminal thing in any one's great-great-

grandfather to rear up a preposterous troop of sons and plant them all out in his own country," Lady Knox said to me with apparent irrelevance. "I detest collaterals. Blood may be thicker than water, but it is also a great deal nastier. In this country I find that fifteenth cousins consider themselves near relations if they live within twenty miles of one!"

Having before now taken in the position with regard to Miss Sally and Mr. Flurry Knox, I took care to accept these remarks as generalities, and turned the conversation to other themes.

"I see Mrs. Yeates is doing wonders with Mr. Hamilton," said Lady Knox presently, following the direction of my eyes, which had strayed away to where Philippa was beaming upon her left-hand neighbour, a mildewed-looking old clergyman, who was delivering a long dissertation, the purport of which we were happily unable to catch.

"She has always had a gift for the Church," I said.

"Not curates?" said Lady Knox, in her deep voice.

I made haste to reply that it was the elders of the Church who were venerated by my wife.

"Well, she has her fancy in old Eustace Hamilton; he's elderly enough!" said Lady Knox. "I wonder if she'd venerate him as much if she knew that he had fought with his sister-in-law, that old Mrs. Knox and they haven't spoken for thirty years! though for the matter of that," she added, "I think it shows his good sense!"

"Mrs. Knox is rather a friend of mine," I ventured.

"Is she? H'm! Well, she's not one of mine!" replied my hostess, with her usual definiteness. "I'll say one thing for her, I believe she's always been a sportswoman. She's very rich, you know, and they say she only married old Badger Knox to save his hounds from being sold to pay his debts, and then she took the horn from him and hunted them herself. Has she been rude to your wife yet? No? Oh, well, she will. It's a mere question of time. She hates all English people. You know the story they tell of her? She was coming home from London, and when she was getting her ticket the man asked if she had said a ticket for York. 'No, thank God, Cork!' says Mrs. Knox."

"Well, I rather agree with her!" said I; "but why did she fight with Mr. Hamilton?"

"Oh, nobody knows. I don't believe they know themselves! Whatever it was, the old lady drives five miles to Fortwilliam every Sunday, rather than go to his church, just outside her own back gates," Lady Knox said with a laugh like a terrier's bark. "I wish I'd fought with him myself," she said; "he gives us forty minutes every Sunday without a check."

As I struggled into my boots the following morning, I felt that Sir Valentine's acid confidences on cub-hunting, bestowed on me at midnight, did credit to his judgement. "A very moderate amusement, my dear Major," he had said, in his dry little voice; "you should stick to shooting. No one expects you to shoot before daybreak."

It was six o'clock as I crept downstairs, and found Lady Knox and Miss Sally at breakfast, with two lamps on the table, and a foggy daylight oozing in from under the half-raised blinds. Philippa was already in the hall, pumping up her bicycle, in a state of excitement at the prospect of her first experience of hunting that would have been more comprehensible to me had she been going to ride a strange horse, as I was. As I bolted my food I saw the horses being led past the windows, and a faint twang of a horn told that Flurry Knox and his hounds were not far off. Miss Sally jumped up.

"If I'm not on the Cockatoo before the hounds come up, I shall never get there!" she said, hobbling out of the room in the toils of her safety habit. Her small, alert face looked very childish under her riding-hat; the lamp-light struck sparks out of her thick coil of golden-red hair: I wondered how I had ever thought her like her prim little father.

She was already on her white cob when I got to the hall-door, and Flurry Knox was riding over the glistening wet grass with his hounds, while his Whip, Dr. Jerome Hickey, was having a stirring time with the young entry and the rabbit-holes. They moved on without stopping, up a back avenue, under tall and dripping trees, to a thick laurel covert, at some little distance from the house. Into this the hounds were thrown, and the usual period of fidgety inaction set in for the riders, of whom, all told, there were about half-a-dozen. Lady Knox, square and solid, on

her big, confidential iron-grey, was near me, and her eyes were on me and my mount; with her rubicund face and white tie she was more than ever like a coachman.

"Sorcerer looks as if he suited you well," she said, after a few minutes of silence, during which the hounds rustled and crackled steadily through the laurels; "he's a little high on the leg, and so are you, you know, so you show each other off."

Sorcerer was standing like a rock, with his good-looking head in the air and his eyes fastened on the covert. His manners, so far, had been those of a perfect gentleman, and were in marked contrast to those of Miss Sally's cob, who was sidling, hopping, and snatching unappeasably at his bit. Philippa had disappeared from view down the avenue ahead. The fog was melting, and the sun threw long blades of light through the trees; everything was quiet, and in the distance the curtained windows of the house marked the warm repose of Sir Valentine, and those of the party who shared his opinion of cubbing.

"Hark! hark to cry there!"

It was Flurry's voice, away at the other side of the covert. The rustling and brushing through the laurels became more vehement, then passed out of hearing.

"He never will leave his hounds alone," said Lady Knox disapprovingly.

Miss Sally and the Cockatoo moved away in a series of heraldic capers towards the end of the laurel plantation, and at the same moment I saw Philippa on her bicycle shoot into view on the drive ahead of us.

"I've seen a fox!" she screamed, white with what I believe to have been personal terror, though she says it was excitement; "it passed quite close to me!"

"What way did he go?" bellowed a voice which I recognised as Dr. Hickey's, somewhere in the deep of the laurels.

"Down the drive!" returned Philippa, with a peahen quality in her tones with which I was quite unacquainted.

An electrifying screech of "Gone away!" was projected from the laurels by Dr. Hickey.

"Gone away!" chanted Flurry's horn at the top of the covert.

"This is what he calls cubbing!" said Lady Knox, "a mere farce!" but none the less she loosed her sedate monster into a canter.

Sorcerer got his hind-legs under him, and hardened his crest against the bit, as we all hustled along the drive after the flying figure of my wife. I knew very little about horses, but I realised that even with the hounds tumbling hysterically out of the covert, and the Cockatoo kicking the gravel into his face, Sorcerer comported himself with the manners of the best society. Up a side road I saw Flurry Knox opening half of a gate and cramming through it; in a moment we also had crammed through, and the turf of a pasture field was under our feet. Dr. Hickey leaned forward and took hold of his horse; I did likewise, with the trifling difference that my horse took hold of me, and I steered for Flurry Knox with single-hearted

purpose, the hounds, already a field ahead, being merely an exciting and noisy accompaniment of this endeavour. A heavy stone wall was the first occurrence of note. Flurry chose a place where the top was loose, and his clumsy-looking brown mare changed feet on the rattling stones like a fairy. Sorcerer came at it, tense and collected as a bow at full stretch, and sailed steeply into the air; I saw the wall far beneath me, with an unsuspected ditch on the far side, and I felt my hat following me at the full stretch of its guard as we swept over it, then, with a long slant, we descended to earth some sixteen feet from where we had left it, and I was possessor of the gratifying fact that I had achieved a good-sized "fly", and had not perceptibly moved in my saddle. Subsequent disillusioning experience has taught me that but few horses jump like Sorcerer, so gallantly, so sympathetically, and with such supreme mastery of the subject; but none the less the enthusiasm that he imparted to me has never been extinguished, and that October morning twenty minutes revealed to me the unsuspected intoxication of fox-hunting.

Behind me I heard the scrabbling of the Cockatoo's little hoofs among the loose stones, and Lady Knox, galloping on my left, jerked a maternal chin over her shoulder to mark her daughter's progress. For my part, had there been an entire circus behind me, I was far too much occupied with ramming on my hat and trying to hold Sorcerer, to have looked round, and all my spare faculties were devoted to steering

for Flurry, who had taken a right-handed turn, and was at that moment surmounting a bank of uncertain and briary aspect. I surmounted it also, with the swiftness and simplicity for which the Quaker's methods of bank jumping had not prepared me, and two or three fields, traversed at the same steeplechase pace, brought us to a road and to an abrupt check. There, suddenly, were the hounds, scrambling in baffled silence down into the road from the opposite bank, to look for the line they had overrun, and there, amazingly, was Philippa engaged in excited converse with several men with spades over their shoulders.

"Did ye see the fox, boys?" shouted Flurry, addressing the group.

"We did! we did!" cried my wife and her new friends in chorus; "he ran up the road!"

"We'd be badly off without Mrs. Yeates!" said Flurry, as he whirled his mare round and clattered up the road with a hustle of hounds after him.

It occurred to me as forcibly as any mere earthly thing can occur to those who are wrapped in the sublimities of a run, that, for a young woman who had never before seen a fox out of a cage at the Zoo, Philippa was taking to hunting very kindly. Her cheeks were a most brilliant pink, her blue eyes shone.

"Oh, Sinclair!" she exclaimed, "they say he's going for Aussolas, and there's a road I can ride all the way!"

"Ye can, Miss! Sure we'll show you!" chorused her *cortège*.

Her foot was on the pedal ready to mount. Decidedly my wife was in no need of assistance from me.

Up the road a hound gave a yelp of discovery, and flung himself over a stile into the fields; the rest of the pack went squealing and jostling after him, and I followed Flurry over one of those infinitely varied erections, pleasantly termed "gaps" in Ireland. On this occasion the gap was made of three razor-edged slabs of slate leaning against the battered head of an iron bedstead, and Sorcerer conveyed to me his thorough knowledge of the matter by a lift of his hind-quarters that made me feel as if I were being skilfully kicked downstairs. To what extent I looked it, I cannot say, nor providentially can Philippa, as she had already started. I only know that undeserved good luck restored to me my stirrup before Sorcerer got away with me in the next field.

What followed was, I am told, a very fast fifteen minutes; for me time was not; the empty fields rushed past uncounted, fences came and went in a flash, while the wind sang in my ears, and the dazzle of the early sun was in my eyes. I saw the hounds occasionally, sometimes pouring over a green bank, as the charging breaker lifts and flings itself, sometimes driving across 'a field, as the white tongues of foam slide racing over the sand; and always ahead of me was Flurry Knox, going as a man goes who knows his country, who knows his horse, and whose heart is wholly and absolutely in the right place.

Do what I would, Sorcerer's implacable stride

carried me closer and closer to the brown mare, till, as I thundered down the slope of a long field, I was not twenty yards behind Flurry. Sorcerer had stiffened his neck to iron, and to slow him down was beyond me; but I fought his head away to the right, and found myself coming hard and steady at a stonefaced bank with broken ground in front of it. Flurry bore away to the left, shouting something that I did not understand. That Sorcerer shortened his stride at the right moment was entirely due to his own judgement; standing well away from the jump, he rose like a stag out of the tussocky ground, and as he swung my twelve stone six into the air the obstacle revealed itself to him and me as consisting not of one bank but of two, and between the two lay a deep grassy lane, half choked with furze. I have often been asked to state the width of the bohereen, and can only reply that in my opinion it was at least eighteen feet; Flurry Knox and Dr. Hickey, who did not jump it, say that it is not more than five. What Sorcerer did with it I cannot say; the sensation was of a towering flight with a kick back in it, a biggish drop, and a landing on cee-springs, still on the down hill grade. That was how one of the best horses in Ireland took one of Ireland's most ignorant riders over a very nasty place.

A sombre line of fir-wood lay ahead, rimmed with a grey wall, and in another couple of minutes we had pulled up on the Aussolas road, and were watching the hounds struggling over the wall into Aussolas demesne.

"No hurry now," said Flurry, turning in his saddle to watch the Cockatoo jump into the road, "he's to ground in the big earth inside. Well, Major, it's well for you that's a big-jumped horse. I thought you were a dead man a while ago when you faced him at the bohereen!"

I was disclaiming intention in the matter when Lady Knox and the others joined us.

"I thought you told me your wife was no sports-woman," she said to me, critically scanning Sorcerer's legs for cuts the while, "but when I saw her a minute ago she had abandoned her bicycle and was running across country like——"

"Look at her now!" interrupted Miss Sally. "Oh!—oh!" In the interval between these exclamations my incredulous eyes beheld my wife in mid-air, hand in hand with a couple of stalwart country boys, with whom she was leaping in unison from the top of a bank on to the road.

Every one, even the saturnine Dr. Hickey, began to laugh; I rode back to Philippa, who was exchanging compliments and congratulations with her escort.

"Oh, Sinclair!" she cried, "wasn't it splendid? I saw you jumping, and everything! Where are they going now?"

"My dear girl," I said, with marital disapproval, "you're killing yourself. Where's your bicycle?"

"Oh, it's punctured in a sort of lane, back there. It's all right; and then they"—she breathlessly waved her hand at her attendants—"they showed me the way."

"Begor! you proved very good, Miss!" said a grinning cavalier.

"Faith she did!" said another, polishing his shining brow with his white flannel coat-sleeve, "she lepped like a haarse!"

"And may I ask how you propose to go home?" said I.

"I don't know and I don't care! I'm not going home!" She cast an entirely disobedient eye at me.

"And your eyeglass is hanging down your back and your tie is bulging out over your waistcoat!"

The little group of riders had begun to move away.

"We're going on into Aussolas," called out Flurry; "come on, and make my grandmother give you some breakfast, Mrs. Yeates; she always has it at eight o'clock."

The front gates were close at hand, and we turned in under the tall beech-trees, with the unswept leaves rustling round the horses' feet, and the lovely blue of the October morning sky filling the spaces between smooth grey branches and golden leaves. The woods rang with the voices of the hounds, enjoying an untrammelled rabbit hunt, while the Master and the Whip, both on foot, strolled along unconcernedly with their bridles over their arms, making themselves agreeable to my wife, an occasional touch of Flurry's horn, or a crack of Dr. Hickey's whip, just indicating to the pack that the authorities still took a friendly interest in their doings.

Down a grassy glade in the wood a party of old

Mrs. Knox's young horses suddenly swept into view, headed by an old mare, who, with her tail over her back, stampeded ponderously past our cavalcade, shaking and swinging her handsome old head, while her youthful friends bucked and kicked and snapped at each other round her with the ferocious humour of their kind.

"Here, Jerome, take the horn," said Flurry to Dr. Hickey; "I'm going to see Mrs. Yeates up to the house, the way these tomfools won't gallop on top of her."

From this point it seems to me that Philippa's adventures are more worthy of record than mine, and as she has favoured me with a full account of them, I venture to think my version may be relied on.

Mrs. Knox was already at breakfast when Philippa was led, quaking, into her formidable presence. My wife's acquaintance with Mrs. Knox was, so far, limited to a state visit on either side, and she found but little comfort in Flurry's assurances that his grandmother wouldn't mind if he brought all the hounds in to breakfast, coupled with the statement that she would put her eyes on sticks for the Major.

Whatever the truth of this may have been, Mrs. Knox received her guest with an equanimity quite unshaken by the fact that her boots were in the fender instead of on her feet, and that a couple of shawls of varying dimensions and degrees of age did not conceal the inner presence of a magenta flannel

dressings-jacket. She installed Philippa at the table and plied her with food, oblivious as to whether the needful implements with which to eat it were forthcoming or no. She told Flurry where a vixen had reared her family, and she watched him ride away, with some biting comments on his mare's hocks screamed after him from the window.

The dining-room at Aussolas Castle is one of the many rooms in Ireland in which Cromwell is said to have stabled his horse (and probably no-one would have objected less than Mrs. Knox had she been consulted in the matter). Philippa questions if the room had ever been tidied up since, and she endorses Flurry's observation that "there wasn't a day in the year you wouldn't get feeding for a hen and chickens on the floor." Opposite to Philippa, on a Louis Quinze chair, sat Mrs. Knox's woolly dog, its suspicious little eyes peering at her out of their setting of pink lids and dirty white wool. A couple of young horses outside the windows tore at the matted creepers on the walls, or thrust faces that were half-shy, half-impudent, into the room. Portly pigeons waddled to and fro on the broad window-sill, sometimes flying in to perch on the picture-frames, while they kept up incessantly a hoarse and pompous cooing.

Animals and children are, as a rule, alike destructive to conversation; but Mrs. Knox, when she chose, *bien entendu*, could have made herself agreeable in a Noah's ark, and Philippa has a gift of sympathetic attention that personal experience has taught me to

regard with distrust as well as respect, while it has often made me realise the worldly wisdom of Kingsley's injunction:

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever.

Family prayers, declaimed by Mrs. Knox with alarming austerity, followed close on breakfast, Philippa and a vinegar-faced henchwoman forming the family. The prayers were long, and through the open window as they progressed came distantly a whoop or two; the declamatory tones staggered a little, and then continued at a distinctly higher rate of speed.

"Ma'am! Ma'am!" whispered a small voice at the window.

Mrs. Knox made a repressive gesture and held on her way. A sudden outcry of hounds followed, and the owner of the whisper, a small boy with a face freckled like a turkey's egg, darted from the window and dragged a donkey and bath-chair into view. Philippa admits to having lost the thread of the discourse, but she thinks that the "Amen" that immediately ensued can hardly have come in its usual place. Mrs. Knox shut the book abruptly, scrambled up from her knees, and said, "They've found!"

In a surprisingly short space of time she had added to her attire her boots, a fur cape, and a garden hat, and was in the bath-chair, the small boy stimulating the donkey with the success peculiar to his class, while Philippa hung on behind.

The woods of Aussolas are hilly and extensive, and on that particular morning it seemed that they held as many foxes as hounds. In vain was the horn blown and the whips cracked, small rejoicing parties of hounds, each with a fox of its own, scoured to and fro: every labourer in the vicinity had left his work, and was sedulously heading every fox with yells that would have befitted a tiger hunt, and sticks and stones when occasion served.

"Will I pull out as far as the big rosydandhrum, ma'am?" inquired the small boy; "I seen three of the dogs go in it, and they yowling."

"You will," said Mrs. Knox, thumping the donkey on the back with her umbrella; "here! Jeremiah Regan! Come down out of that with that pitchfork! Do you want to kill the fox, you fool?"

"I do not, your honour, ma'am," responded Jeremiah Regan a tall young countryman, emerging from a bramble brake.

"Did you see him?" said Mrs. Knox eagerly.

"I seen himself and his ten pups drinking below at the lake ere yestherday, your honour, ma'am, and he as big as a chestnut horse!" said Jeremiah.

"Faugh! Yesterday!" snorted Mrs. Knox; "go on to the rhododendrons, Johnny!"

The party, reinforced by Jeremiah and the pitchfork, progressed at a high rate of speed along the shrubbery path, encountering *en route* Lady Knox, stooping on to her horse's neck under the sweeping branches of the laurels.

"Your horse is too high for my coverts, Lady Knox," said the Lady of the Manor, with a malicious eye at Lady Knox's flushed face and dinged hat; "I'm afraid you will be left behind like Absalom when the hounds go away!"

"As they never do anything here but hunt rabbits," retorted her ladyship, "I don't think that's likely."

Mrs. Knox gave her donkey another whack, and passed on.

"Rabbits, my dear!" she said scornfully to Philippa. "That's all she knows about it. I declare it disgusts me to see a woman of that age making such a Judy of herself! Rabbits indeed!"

Down in the thicket of rhododendron everything was very quiet for a time. Philippa strained her eyes in vain to see any of the riders; the horn-blowing and the whip-cracking passed on almost out of hearing. Once or twice a hound worked through the rhododendrons, glanced at the party, and hurried on, immersed in business. All at once Johnny, the donkey-boy, whispered excitedly:

"Look at he! Look at he!" and pointed to a boulder of grey rock that stood out among the dark evergreens. A big yellow cub was crouching on it; he instantly slid into the shelter of the bushes, and the irrepressible Jeremiah, uttering a rending shriek, plunged into the thicket after him. Two or three hounds came rushing at the sound, and after this Philippa says she finds some difficulty in recalling

the proper order of events; chiefly, she confesses, because of the wholly ridiculous tears of excitement that blurred her eyes.

"We ran," she said, "we simply tore, and the donkey galloped, and as for that old Mrs. Knox, she was giving cracked screams to the hounds all the time, and they were screaming too; and then somehow we were all out on the road!" What seems to have occurred was that three couple of hounds, Jeremiah Regan and Mrs. Knox's equipage amongst them, somehow hustled the cub out of Aussolas demesne and up on to a hill on the farther side of the road. Jeremiah was sent back by his mistress to fetch Flurry, and the rest of the party pursued a thrilling course along the road, parallel with that of the hounds, who were hunting slowly through the gorse on the hillside.

"Upon my honour and word, Mrs. Yeates, my dear, we have the hunt to ourselves!" said Mrs. Knox to the panting Philippa, as they pounded along the road. "Johnny, d'ye see the fox?"

"I do, ma'am!" shrieked Johnny, who possessed the usual field-glass vision bestowed upon his kind. "Look at him over-right us on the hill above! Hil! The spotty dog have him! No, he's gone from him! *Gwan out o' that!*" This to the donkey, with blows that sounded like the beating of carpets, and produced rather more dust.

They had left Aussolas some half a mile behind, when, from a strip of wood on their right, the fox

suddenly slipped over the bank on to the road just ahead of them, ran up it for a few yards and whisked in at a small entrance gate, with the three couple of hounds yelling on a red-hot scent, not thirty yards behind. The bath-chair party whirled in at their heels, Philippa and the donkey considerably blown, Johnny scarlet through his freckles, but as fresh as paint, the old lady blind and deaf to all things save the chase. The hounds went raging through the shrubs beside the drive, and away down a grassy slope towards a shallow glen, in the bottom of which ran a little stream, and after them over the grass bumped the bath-chair. At the stream they turned sharply and ran up the glen towards the avenue, which crossed it by means of a rough stone viaduct.

"'Pon me conscience, he's into the old culvert!" exclaimed Mrs. Knox; "there was one of my hounds choked there once, long ago! Beat on the donkey, Johnny!"

At this juncture Philippa's narrative again becomes incoherent, not to say breathless. She is, however, positive that it was somewhere about here that the upset of the bath-chair occurred, but she cannot be clear as to whether she picked up the donkey or Mrs. Knox, or whether she herself was picked up by Johnny while Mrs. Knox picked up the donkey. From my knowledge of Mrs. Knox I should say she picked up herself and no-one else. At all events, the next salient point is the palpitating moment when Mrs. Knox, Johnny, and Philippa successively applying an

eye to the opening of the culvert by which the stream trickled under the viaduct, while five dripping hounds bayed and leaped around them, discovered by more senses than that of sight that the fox was in it, and furthermore that one of the hounds was in it too.

"There's a sthrong grating before him at the far end," said Johnny, his head in at the mouth of the hole, his voice sounding as if he were talking into a jug, "the two of them's fighting in it; they'll be choked surely!"

"Then don't stand gabbling there, you little fool, but get in and pull the hound out!" exclaimed Mrs. Knox, who was balancing herself on a stone in the stream.

"I'd be in dread, ma'am," whined Johnny.

"Balderdash!" said the implacable Mrs. Knox. "In with you!"

I understand that Philippa assisted Johnny into the culvert, and presume that it was in so doing that she acquired the two Robinson Crusoe bare footprints which decorated her jacket when I next met her.

"Have you got hold of him yet, Johnny?" cried Mrs. Knox up the culvert.

"I have, ma'am, by the tail," responded Johnny's voice, sepulchral in the depths.

"Can you stir him, Johnny?"

"I cannot, ma'am, and the wather is rising in it."

"Well, please God, they'll not open the mill dam!" remarked Mrs. Knox philosophically to Philippa, as

she caught hold of Johnny's dirty ankles. "Hold on to the tail, Johnny!"

She hauled, with, as might be expected, no appreciable result. "Run, my dear, and look for somebody, and we'll have that fox yet!"

Philippa ran, whither she knew not, pursued by fearful visions of bursting mill-dams, and maddened foxes at bay. As she sped up the avenue she heard voices, robust male voices, in a shrubbery, and made for them. Advancing along an embowered walk towards her was what she took for one wild instant to be a funeral; a second glance showed her that it was a party of clergymen of all ages, walking by twos and threes in the dappled shade of the over-arching trees. Obviously she had intruded her sacrilegious presence into a Clerical Meeting. She acknowledges that at this awe-inspiring spectacle she faltered, but the thought of Johnny, the hound, and the fox, suffocating, possibly drowning together in the culvert, nerved her. She does not remember what she said or how she said it, but I fancy she must have conveyed to them the impression that old Mrs. Knox was being drowned, as she immediately found herself heading a charge of the Irish Church towards the scene of disaster.

Fate has not always used me well, but on this occasion it was mercifully decreed that I and the other members of the hunt should be privileged to arrive in time to see my wife and her rescue party precipitating themselves down the glen.

"Holy Biddy!" ejaculated Flurry, "is she running

a paperchase with all the parsons? But look! For pity's sake will you look at my grandmother and my Uncle Eustace? "

Mrs. Knox and her sworn enemy the old clergyman, whom I had met at dinner the night before, were standing, apparently in the stream, tugging at two bare legs that projected from a hole in the viaduct, and arguing at the top of their voices. The bath-chair lay on its side with the donkey grazing beside it, on the bank a stout Archdeacon was tendering advice, and the hounds danced and howled round the entire group.

" I tell you, Eliza, you had better let the Archdeacon try," thundered Mr. Hamilton.

" Then I tell you I will not! " vociferated Mrs. Knox, with a tug at the end of the sentence that elicited a subterranean lament from Johnny. " Now who was right about the second grating? I told you so twenty years ago! "

Exactly as Philippa and her rescue party arrived, the efforts of Mrs. Knox and her brother-in-law triumphed. The struggling, sopping form of Johnny was slowly drawn from the hole, drenched, speechless, but clinging to the stern of a hound, who, in its turn, had its jaws fast in the hindquarters of a limp, yellow cub.

" Oh, it's dead! " wailed Philippa, " but I *did* think I should have been in time to save it! "

" Well, if that doesn't beat all! " said Dr. Hickey.

By
ANDREW SOUTAR



PRIDE OF THE RING

THIS is the tale of Terry McCully, the fighter, as it was told to me in the smoke-ridden parlour of the Tavern of the Broken Tooth. It is a modern tale, you might say, for McCully was one of the boys that went through the blood and sweat of Flanders with a rifle handy to his reach but greater faith in the smiting power of his fists. McCully was reared within the environs of "dear ould dirty Dublin", but back along his line, of which he knew nothing, there had been McCullys who drank in the company of "Corinthians" and fought for their patrons with a loyalty hat staggered along to death rather than dishonour.

Very proud of his country and its history of ring fighters was the man who told the tale: and he told it with the faintest brogue that carried it along as music carries men on the march. Now and then, but not often, he slipped in a colloquialism that made the pedantic phrase a thing to be ashamed of.

Light, middle, then heavy-weight, said he, as he stretched his broad back to the fireplace and clasped his hands behind him. McCully went through his classes like the good boy he was. Quick on his feet as

a leopard he was, with a punch in both hands that would have knocked a hole through the side of a battleship. There was never a finer exponent of the one-two punch than that same McCully. Left lead to the head and a right to the body with not the tick of an ould clock between the blows. Head weaving in like it was the head of a snake or a stoat turning over on its back to make its upward strike at the rabbit Muscles rippling like the face of a river wid the breeze against the tide. Eyes shining like a tiger's when the lust of blood is on it.

Then came the night when he took the count! And for him the Vault of Heaven was split and scorn poured down like rain in November. It was the night that McCully tried to come back, as they say in the language of the ring. For he had fallen from his high estate long before that. The little woman, Kate O'Hara, was the cause of that fall, for to McCully she had said as she rested her cheek against his: "'Tis me or this fightin' ye've got to stand by. Me heart's not in it, Terry me darlint."

So he gave up the fighting, for he loved her wid the passion the flowers love the sun. And the managers cussed him for a fool, for they said he might have touched the form of a champion if he had stayed in the game.

He took a job in the blast furnace, flinging shovel-fuls of coal into the fires when he ought to have been flinging his fists into a man's face and body. They paid him but two pounds a week when he might have

been reaching out for a couple of hundred after a ten-round fight.

But he had Kitty! And that was worth it all, said he.

The heat of the furnace sucked the strength out of him, so it did. The glare of the fires bit into his eyes—eyes that used to see a man's intentions a second before he drew back his glove to strike. Sometimes, when the fans were going, and blowing the fires into flame, he fancied he heard the roar of the audience like they used to roar when he had his man "going" wid his knees sagging and his eyes asquint like a Chinyman's. That roar was as sweet to his soul as the patter of rain to the parched corn, so it was. "Go in, McCully, and finish him!" Then would he measure his man by houlding the left glove to the tip of the chin and fetching his right over wid a snap. And maybe he'd cry like a kid when the other fellow went down. And he'd help him up—lift him up in his arms when the referee had said "Enough", or the timekeeper had spun out the ten seconds. And he'd pat him on the shoulder when he came round, and say: "Ye're a good bhoy, but th' luck was against ye."

That was McCully. Good lad, McCully! And he married Kitty who didn't have the heart for fighting but just loved to sit by the fire o' nights and talk of the babe that was lying close to her heart.

Now, the memory of the sporting public is as short as a workman's holiday. McCully was forgotten and the newspapers that used to tell the public when his hat blew off in a high wind couldn't have found a

photygraph of him if he'd died and left half-a-million to a thieves' club. That's the way of the world. Ye've got to keep in the limelight or go to sleep in the shadows.

McCully's little wife, Kitty, fell sick, and there was a greater sickness to come before she'd get well. And down at the blast furnace they had a run of bad luck, so they had, and reduced the pay of Terry McCully by as much as ten shillings a week.

And the doctor said to Terry: "It'll cost ye twenty pounds to see her safely through."

And the priest—a fine man was Father Flanigan—said to him:

"Put your guts into it, my bhoy. She's worth more than twenty pounds. Ye big mutton-fed baby!"

And McCully said to himself: "She's worth twenty thousand to me, but how can I get it?" His was the only logical survey of the situation. The doctors tell ye "oysters" are the medicine, and ye haven't the price of cockles.

For two or three weeks McCully fasted as though every day was a Saint's Day. And he fed the little woman wid all the delicacies that a woman in her condition craves in times like these. And when he'd fed her wid all he'd been able to buy and lied to her—the scoundrel—saying he'd fed like a fighting-cock in the next room when not so much as the bone of a bloater had passed his lips, she'd clasp her arms around his neck and say: "Terry, me man, it's grateful to God I am for having ye to be my husband."

And Terry would say no more than this: "I'd fight for ye, Kitty, until there wasn't a punch left in me."

The job of getting twenty pounds together wouldn't keep a financier from his sleep, but to a prize-fighter who has been out of the public eye for a while after disappointing a manager and maybe a few promoters it's a divvle of a task. Terry knew he had to get the money if he loved her, and he knew that the only way to get it was to fight for it.

Mother o' mine, did ye ever hear of anything so crazy as an under-fed, untrained ex-pugilist looking around for a backer and saying he would like to take the ring against the best at his weight?

Tim Sullivan, who ran the Arena, laughed in Terry's face when he was asked for a fight. "You fight!" said he, as he looked at the sorry wreck of a man (for, I'm telling ye that the blast furnace had walloped most of the life out of the lad). "Ye couldn't knock a sick kid out of a p'rambulator," says Tim, adding by way of compensation: "Now, there was a time when ye could have filled a big house. Get ye back to the blast," says he, "and larn to handle yer shovel as ye'll have to handle it when they've closed yer eyes wid a couple o' pennies."

Now, there's a trait in the character of your best fighters that's as fine as anything the priest has ever spoken about. It isn't always the end of the purse he's thinking about when he rubs his pumps in the resin and waits for the gong to send him to the centre of the ring. Sometimes—many times—generally—it's

the pride he takes in his profession. So it was wid Terry McCully. "Winner can take all," he says to Tim Sullivan. "And I'll fight the best ye can put in the ring against me."

"Go and bathe yer head in the Liffey," says Tim, "and get the swelling down." But as he was turning away from the lad he saw something in his eye that reminded him of his own boy when he came home from his wanderings and was too proud to ask for the price of a meal. So he gave Terry a pat on the shoulder and he said: "No, boy, ye couldn't do it. If I put ye up against one of the cheap lads he'd paste ye, mebbe, and all that ye've done in the past would be ruined, so it would." He slipped a pound note into Terry's hand and left the lad staring at it through a screen of tears.

Terry McCully, best at his weight not long before, taking charity from such as Tim Sullivan!

He went home to Kitty and sat wid her until she fell asleep. The ould clock on the mantel-shelf ticked away as though it knew it was the only thing in the house that was paid for. "Tick-tock—twenty pounds! Tick-tock—twenty pounds!" That was the chanting that played the very divvle wid Terry's nerves.

He went again to see Tim Sullivan. And Tim was as mad as a red-eyed cat after it's been chased by a couple of terriers. The big fight he'd promoted between Dan Hogan, the coming champion, and a fellow from South Wales who had been shouted in the newspapers, couldn't go through, for the Welshman had fallen sick of the palsy, or the backache, or

the toothache. Tim had to get a substitute and be mighty smart about it. "I'd like to fight Hogan," said Terry. "He was my sparring partner two years ago. I paid him a couple o' quid a week for the job."

"Ye poor fish," said Tim Sullivan. "Hogan will be the British heavy-weight champion inside twelve-months."

And Terry McCully said nothing to that, for he couldn't trust himself to speak. His pride was hurt, and there'd be a shake in his voice if he reminded Tim Sullivan that not so long ago Tim had been proud to walk by his side.

And Tim saw again that look in the lad's eye that appealed to the sentiment in him.

"Pity ye married," he said. "There was a future for ye that would have made the ghost of the last king of Ireland sick wid envy, so it would."

"'Tis not yer pity I'm asking for," said Terry, like the brave lad he was. "I'm asking for a fight."

Tim jerked his head back in contempt.

"And ye've trained in the blast," said he, and spat. "Divvle a bit o' colour is there in yer cheeks, and no snap to yer eyes. Ye've fed on tinned fish and kisses, and Hogan would hit ye just once and I'd have the pollis afther me for allowin' murther. Get ye home, Terry, and forget ye were ever a fighter."

"There's a kid comin'," said Terry wid a little tremble in his voice, "and it's twenty pounds I'm needin'. Gimme a fight wid Hogan."

Now that Tim Sullivan was never made to run

fighths: there was a soft spot in his heart that would have made a fine priest of him.

"Come to see me to-morrow night," said he. And as Terry was backing out of the room the big-hearted fellow said: "Look here, Terry me lad, I can't afford twenty pounds, but if a fiver's any use to ye I'm the man to spring it."

"Keep yer fiver," said Terry McCully. "It isn't charity I'm seeking for the kid—I want to earn it. Nice thing for the bhoys to be telling that kid when I'm gone that Terry McCully had to go out and beg for it. Gimme a fight, Tim Sullivan."

And shure Tim did. He was in sore trouble because the big scrap couldn't be brought off, but he knew the patrons of his hall would forgive him if he put up a substitute and pulled down his prices. It was when he announced on the placards that Hogan would fight ten rounds wid Terry McCully rather than disappoint his followers by not showing himself—it was when he did that widdout a blush that they hurled laughter at him. Was he flinging poor Terry to the lions?

"Twenty pounds ye shall have if ye weather three rounds," said Tim to the lad, "but if Hogan forgets to pull his punch and knocks that red head of yours off, don't expect me to pay the funeral expenses."

"I don't ask Hogan to pull any punch," said Terry. "I'll take all he can sling at me."

He went home a happy man and he talked to Kitty about "a little bit of extra work he was going to do for a friend after he'd left the blast of a night"

She was satisfied wid that, the time being near for her to travel along the Valley. She paid no heed to the sound of stockinged feet sliding across the floor on the next room where Terry was doing a little shadow boxing to work up his speed. And when he went out in the dark for a run along the roads, he wore an old overcoat over his shorts so's she wouldn't even guess what that "extra bit of work" amounted to. Then he'd hide the overcoat in an outhouse and swing away on his lonesome.

Twenty pounds! Tim Sullivan was to pay him twenty pounds if he lasted three rounds!

The doctor called to see Kitty on the afternoon of the day fixed for the fight, and Terry whispered to him that there was no pressing need to tell her of what was to happen in Tim Sullivan's hall that night.

"Me ould mother will come round and sit wid her whiles I'm away," said he, "and I'll be back before eleven."

"Ye'll be a father by that time," said the doctor. "It's a game lad ye are. Ye'll get a pasting, so ye will."

"It's the money I want," said Terry, "and if Hogan can gimme a pastin' along wid Tim's money he's a better lad than I take him to be."

When the time was come for him to set out for the hall, he bent over the bed and kissed Kitty on the lips and the cheeks.

"It's a brave woman ye are, Kitty," said he.

"No braver than Terry McCully," said she. "Go to your work and leave me to get on wid mine."

Now, Dan Hogan was a fine upstanding fellow, and as fit as a trainer's hands could make him. He'd been preparing for the fight with the Welshman and was ready to battle for a kingdom, as the papers say. He had laughed sneeringly when Tim Sullivan told him of the substitute he'd engaged.

"Don't ye hurt the lad too much," said Tim. "He's done no training to speak of and is as soft in the body as a cat's stomach."

"I'll just play wid him," said Hogan. But back of his mind there was a memory of a hiding Terry had given him when he was sparring partner to him: that was long before Terry took up his job at the blast. Hogan told himself that he would batter the lad so's his mother would be ashamed to acknowledge the relationship.

There was a big crowd gathered in Tim Sullivan's hall on the night of the fight. Somehow the boxing fan takes kindly to a lad that's trying to make a comeback, while champions don't get much sympathy.

There was a roar like a river going over a weir when Terry's figure showed itself coming from the dressing-room. That face of his was white—white as a miller's—but there was fine courage in his eyes. He came down the aisle wid a pathetic smile on his face and an ould overcoat flung over his shoulders instead of the dressing-gown he used to sport when he was a flower of the ring.

They gave him a fine welcome.

"Terry, me darlint, belt him in the slats," yelled one. "Show's yer ould form, me lad," yelled another.

Yes, they remembered the battles the bhoys had put up in that very hall, and although it was only a make-shift fight they'd paid their money to see, they seemed to have the notion that there was a drama behind it all and it would stir them to their boots before it was through.

Twenty pounds if he stood up for three rounds!

He was thinking about the offer of Tim Sullivan as he sat in his corner and awaited the arrival of Hogan. Tim had given him a couple of ould seconds attached to his business: Hogan had his own. The arc lamps flickered and spluttered same as they were hissing the red-headed Terry: then, when Hogan came down the aisle wearing a gown that would have tickled a nabob to death, those same lights straightened themselves out and stared in homage at the big fellow.

Hogan gave Terry a nod as he passed him on his way to his corner, but he said to one of his seconds in a voice loud enough for Terry to hear: "About a couple of rounds, I suppose." That was to unnerve the lad who'd been his master in the ould days.

Terry said never a word to his seconds. He sat back in his corner and talked to Kitty who was sitting up yonder on the rafters and looking down on him wid compassion in her eyes. And in her arms was a bundle of wool wid a pink face no bigger than a clam shell.

"Seconds out," said Haggarty, the time-keeper.
"Time!"

There was a hush as the lads went from their corners. Hogan led wid his left—Terry always let the other

man lead to find out just how snappy he was wid that hand. He slipped the lead, and countered wid a hard punch to Hogan's middle, then dropped into a clinch as neatly as a cog dropping into its segment. Break! And Terry came away wid all the ould sprightliness, standing up on his toes like a ballet dancer. "Hurroo!" yelled the fans. "That's the ould Terry McCully!"

Hogan went after him, working him into a corner, head down, gloves scything bits out of the air. Into the corner! Terry tried hard to keep away from it because he knew he couldn't stand much close-in work, not having trained as in the ould days. He tried to side-step out of his trouble, but Hogan swung a wicked left to his ribs, and, coming closer, jabbed him hard in the region of the heart. Terry tried to clinch again, but Hogan, who was strong as neat rum, wouldn't have it: he pushed him away and gave him some of the nastiest wrist jabs he could put over.

Terry laughed, but he didn't feel like laughing. He stepped out lively, danced and pranced, and his eyes were staring hard into Hogan's.

"Box him, Terry," yelled a fellow in the gallery, as Hogan went in close, his hands going like pistons.

Terry tried a left lead to the jaw. Oh, man, it was a beauty! Like the tongue of a snake shooting out. Straight to the point.

"That's ould Terry!" the crowd yelped. But it wasn't, Hogan did no more than grin. And Terry's heart was made sick. For he knew the ould punch was missing. That blow should have given Hogan a

pain: it did no more than make him laugh. If ye fall out of training for a spell, it's the weight of your punch that goes back on you. Many a time had Terry dropped his man wid a punch that travelled no more than four inches, but there was "body" behind it in those days. Again, he tried the left to the point, and connected so perfectly that the house rose to its feet expecting to see Hogan go down. Not he. He rushed the lad, taking chances that no champion would dream of taking unless he was fighting a one-eyed cobbler from Connemara. Right and left he smashed at Terry's ribs, and it was the striking of the gong and the end of the round that saved him.

He slithered back to his corner like he was drunk. Hogan walked jauntily and talked wid his seconds as they ran the sponge and their hands over him.

Terry listened to his seconds, but he couldn't catch all they were saying. It was the voice of Kitty that filled his ears. "And when they've made ye foreman at the blast," she was saying, "we'll save for the hollyday by the sea. And, Terry, me man, there'll be another wid us by then."

The second who was massaging his stomach said to him: "Hogan's mighty strong. Keep away from him if ye want to stand up three rounds. He'll wear ye down if ye go in for in-fightin'. Show him some of the ould stuff. Give him the one-two and get away, and for the love of Pete keep an eye on me and my signals."

They shoved him up for the second round, but they said among themselves it was like sending him

to his death. Hogan had marked him pretty badly. One eye was closing, and there was a red pattern painted on his hide.

Hogan knew all about that twenty pounds for three rounds arrangement, and he said to his seconds that sooner than let the lad pick it up he'd fling the ring-posts at him.

As they came together for that second round, Hogan said to him: "Now, ye big red-headed pup, I'm goin' to make ye fight." That was to provoke him.

Down from the rafters came the voice of Kitty: "Box him, Terry me man. There's no beef in ye, and ye can't afford to rough it. Give him wan for me and wan for the kid."

Did he? Oh, if ye could read the tales the 'papers printed about that second round! The ould gladiator found himself. He sailed in wid the speed of a feather-weight, sailed in on his toes, chin well down on his chest, his right glove moving like a snake's head. Snap! And he had Hogan on the chin, again. There was greater strength behind that punch. Down went Hogan! The house pushed up its roof to let the shouts get out. "Get back," says the referee to Terry. He stepped back and rested his tired arms on the ropes. He didn't think Hogan could recover from that punch before the ten was counted. But he did. "Go in!" yelled Terry's seconds. "Go in and finish him!" Terry slid in, much against his better judgement, and Hogan met him with a hit to the mark that took the wind out of him and spread his lips in

a search for air. He was down. He managed to turn over and get to his knees. He could hear the people shouting, for that is the way of the punch to the mark—ye can hear all that's happening around ye but yer can't get to your feet. Kitty! Kitty! Lord, Kitty, there was twenty pounds at stake! He got to his feet. Hogan the mankiller went in to finish him. Terry saw the right coming across to his chin, but he hadn't the strength to duck it or fling up a guard. It was coming like a mountain being flung at him. If only he had trained another day or two, or fed his muscles wid something more sustaining than porridge and baked beans!

And something happened! The arc lamps went out. The hall was in darkness. The voice of Tim Sullivan bellowed through the hall:

" 'Tis only a fuse gone," shouted Tim, but Terry knew it was Kitty who had leaned down from the rafters and put out the lights so's he might get back his wind.

He had groped his way to his corner. The fans had struck matches and were holding them above their heads. And electric torches were fetched from nowhere, and the electricians rushed in, and before five minutes had gone the lights were glaring again. And so was Terry McCully. He had tasted the blood of victory.

Then came the third round. Hogan said to the men in his corner: " I'll hit him that far ye'll not find him to-morrow."

" Pile your weight on him, Hogan," they said.

"I will," said he. "For he hasn't the strength of a consumptive beetle."

And he went in to slay the lad wid short-arm jabs to the stomach and hooks to the head. It was the third round and there was that matter of twenty pounds in the balance, and Kitty, sitting on the rafters, was calling to 'Terry: "Hold up, boy, and get through the three rounds. 'Then we're safe and the doctor's bill is paid and the nurse's and we're in clover—and we'll pack away to the seaside when they've made ye foreman of the blast."

One eye closed! But he was a prince at the game of fighting. He slipped and ducked and hammered Hogan until the big fellow looked like a sacrifice to the gods. The twenty pounds was rustling in Terry's hand. He could hear the doctor saying: "Thank you, Mister McCully, and I'm proud to know that ye beat Dan Hogan." He could hear Kitty saying: . . . Oh, what was she saying? How could he tell her the truth? For she hated this fighting game.

Hogan came in to make it a rough house, as they say. He punched at the ribs, he hooked at the head. He couldn't understand why the lad didn't go down. And then he realised that if he didn't do something shady, Terry would have him out, for his own strength was going fast.

Now, there is one move in boxing that is dirty and dangerous. It isn't practised by men who love the sport—it's used by those who know the game is going against them.

Listen to this carefully:

You let the other man lead to the head wid the left. You slip that lead by moving your head to the left. At the same time you step forward an inch or two wid your right foot. That brings you standing wid your right side turned to the stomach of your man. Quick as lightning, ye smash a glancing blow at his plexus—right on the mark! You carry through like you meant to turn your back on him, then you spin back, as it might be, turning again to the forward position and bringing the knuckle of your glove to the same spot that ye hit when ye carried through. 'Tis a fancy blow and perfectly fair if ye play it straight. But if he has worked his man into the blind eye of the referee, the blackguard carries through, as you've heard, then brings his *elbow* back into the plexus. Oh, 'tis a sorry blow a man can inflict wid just that trick.

And Hogan played that trick, so he did.

There was a time when Terry McCully could have taken a score of those punches, but not on this night—no, not on this night. Down he went wid his mouth spread, and the agony in his eyes was pitiful to see. He knew the blow was unfair, but the referee hadn't seen it, and Terry was not the bhoy to squeal if the referee was against him.

The time-keeper was counting: . . . "Six, seven, eight. . . ." Then the gong went for the end of the round! Terry was saved so far as his twenty pounds was concerned, because he had weathered three rounds, but they couldn't pull him together for the

fourth, and the referee held up the arm of Dan Hogan as the winner.

Terry McCully got back his strength before Hogan could leave the ring. There was a flame in his eyes that no man had seen there before. Somebody in the crowd was laughing at the fall of the man who had once touched championship form and had taken the count at the end of three rounds wid a fellow who had been no more than his sparring partner.

The pride of the bhoys was sorely hurt. He knew that blow wasn't fair, but that wasn't the protest he was going to make. He got to his feet—the game lad!—and staggered to the centre of the ring, holding up his right hand to ask the people for silence.

“Shoot, Terry!” said one, encouragingly.

“I challenge Hogan to another fight,” said Terry.

The roar of laughter brought the blood to the cheeks of the lad and he bit on his lower lip.

“Yes,” said he, “for twenty pounds a side, winner take all.” And he looked towards his corner where Tim Sullivan was standing wid his chin resting on the canvas of the ring.

“Who's yer backer?” somebody shouted.

“I got me own money,” said Terry, and again he looked at Tim Sullivan.

Hogan laughed like he was sorry for the lad and climbed through the ropes.

Terry went back to his corner and let his chief second swing the ould overcoat over his shoulders. Tim Sullivan helped him through the ropes.

"Get ye home to Kitty," said Tim, and pushed twenty pounds in notes into his hand. "Wad ye waste all that money and her wanting it badly?"

Terry said never a word, but went up the aisle and along to his dressing-room. There, they tried to comfort him, for he was sore distressed. They left him to put on his clothes, because there was another bout going on in the ring. He sat wid his head in his hands for a while, then the pain of defeat and the disgrace of having lost became too much for him. He rushed out of his dressing-room and made his way to Hogan's.

Now, Hogan was lying back on a camp bed that was like a couch and he was laughing wid his seconds when Terry pushed open the door.

"Get up, ye big harp," said Terry, "and fight me fair."

"Throw him out," said Hogan to his friends.

"Fight me here," said Terry. "Fight me in this dam' room and I'll teach ye how to box—and fight."

"Lose yerself," said Hogan. "Ye tire me."

And Terry strode up to him at that and fetched him a welt across the cheek.

"Now, ye fouler," he said, "fight. And I'll back myself for twenty pounds. The money's here, in my fist." And he showed the twenty pounds that Tim Sullivan had given him for his job that night—the money that was needed to help the little 'un to come into the world.

Hogan scrambled off the bed and there was an ugly look in his eyes.

"Where shall I hit him?" he said to his friends.

"Aw, take the money," said one. "He deserves to lose it anyway."

And down went Terry's money on the bed where it could be picked up if Hogan should drop him for the count.

They fought—there, in that dressing-room—wid nobody to shout but the friends of Dan Hogan, the fouler.

"I was a great fight, and there was only one man in it. And that man was Terry McCully. Every trick that he'd learned at the trade was brought into play. He slammed Dan Hogan like he was punching the bag in the gymnasium. He hit him right and left: he sent him down three times in the first two minutes: he closed his left eye: he taught him how to box and how to fight. Out of the past came all the strength he used to joy in. Hogan tried to rush him, hoping to fling the whole of his weight on him and bear him down. Terry stepped aside a fraction of a second before Hogan reached him. Then, wid an awful right cross to the heart he sent the big hulk crashing on the floor.

Terry had won! If only he could have fought like that a little while before!

Hogan's friends brought their man round and propped him on the bed, and he looked at Terry wid the one eye that was good. "Ye can fight," he said, "but ye get no twenty pounds out of me."

And the others would have flung the lad out of the room and grabbed his own stake if Tim Sullivan hadn't spoke up.

"I've been watching that scrap from the doorway," he said, "and if Dan Hogan doesn't cover that twenty of Terry's, he gets no more fights in my place. And what's more," said he, "if he'd like another match wid Terry McCully he can have wan. And what's more than *that*, I'll put up a purse of a hundred of the best, winner take all. Are ye for it. Terry McCully?"

And Terry gathered up the forty pounds—his stake and winnings. He wiped away the trickle of blood that was on his lips and sort of smiled through the eye that wasn't closed by the fight in the ring.

"Thank ye, Tim," said he, "but I'm done wid the fightin' game. Ye see, Kitty doesn't like it."

"Terry, me bhoy," said Tim, "let me have ye trained at my own expense."

Terry shook his head.

"I'm back at the blast to-morrow," said he. Then he went over to Hogan and held out his hand. "Say I'm your master," said he.

"Ye are," said he, for he didn't like the way Terry was carrying his left fist.

And wid that Terry shook hands all round and went back to his dressing-room. He pulled the ould overcoat over his shoulders and set out for home. There was a big singing in his heart, and he held his head high as a man should who has vindicated himself.

The doctor was smoking a pipe downstairs when Terry reached the house.

"How goes it?" said he.

"You ask Tim Sullivan," said Terry, and showed him the handful of banknotes.

"I knew ye could beat him," said the doctor.

"Now come along upstairs and take a squint at Terry the Second. He's the finest youngster I've helped into the world for many a moon."

And Terry went quietly up the stairs to where Kitty was lying wid a bundle of wool pressed close to her heart. And as Terry bent over the bed he said to her:

"It's a brave woman ye are, Kitty Darlint."

"No braver than ye, Terry me man," said she.

And she pulled aside the wrappings of wool and let him peek at the tiny thing she was hugging to her.

Terry blinked like a cat in the sunlight. And there were tears in his eyes as he smiled. Then he went back down the stairs wid the doctor, for the nurse said she'd hammer the life out of him if he stayed another minute, so she would. And he sat wid the doctor for an hour and yarned about the fights he'd fought in the days gone by. And they'd a tiny drop of something from the doctor's flask, and—and Terry said:

"Doc., life's wonderful when ye put yer guts into it—what?"

"Shure," said the doctor, putting back into his pocket the empty flask.

By
HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL



UNCLE

I

Habakkuk Mucklow—known as “Uncle” to everybody in and about Nether-Applewhite—was a sportsman who loved the chase even better than he loved good ale. He was nearly sixty when the war broke out, but he harboured deer and ran with hounds afoot as of yore. In his happy case pleasure marched hand in hand with business. Strangers lost in the Forest of Ys, fearful of bogs, were likely to be speeded in the right direction by this jovial, clean-shaven man, whose smile was worth at least sixpence, and whose wise words might and did earn half a crown.

You may be sure that he never missed a meet at Christmastide. And he boasted a memory that never forgot a staunch horse or hound or the face of any follower who had tipped him. He could describe any famous run from find to finish, and knew every notable buck and fox who had “diddled” the hounds in previous seasons, not to mention those who had perished gloriously when their time came.

But he was at his best in the sanded parlour of the Sir John Barleycorn tavern, where, tankard in hand,

he would hold forth to the gaffers of the village concerning the day's sport and those who had taken part in it. Of the old-timers, the men and women born and bred in the Forest, he invariably spoke with respect, whether they tipped him handsomely or not. But new-comers, however lavish of money, provoked sharp criticism.

"Who be the Bostocks," he would ask, "who be they? Not quality."

The Bostocks had bought a nice property just outside the Forest, and spent much money upon a rambling old house, money made somewhere in the north out of soap or jute or rubber. Bostock père had been given sound advice before he settled in a neighbourhood well known to be "cliquey" and "starchy". A good-natured cynic said to him: "They won't care how you made your money down there, if you engage a first-rate cook and buy the best wine." Thomas Bostock had not asked for this advice, but he took it. Nevertheless, he might have languished for some years as a comparative outsider, despite his many possessions, had not the most precious of these happened to be a charming daughter, who rode well to hounds. Bostock subscribed munificently to foxhounds and buckhounds, and within a couple of seasons was accepted as being "in" the Forest if not "of" it.

He was not yet accepted by Uncle.

An old gaffer answered Habakkuk Mucklow.

"They Bostocks be rich folk; they pays good wages, and I says——"

Uncle interrupted promptly:

"I don't care what you says, granfer; I want you to listen to what I says. Old Bostock be a carpet-bagger."

"Carpet-bagger? What be that?"

Uncle eyed him whimsically:

"I bain't surprised at your gert ignerunce, granfer. Likely as not you never heard tell o' Captain Columbus? Did 'ee now?"

"I dunno as I minds the name as belongin' to these parts."

"He discovered Ameriky, he did. And Captain were the first carpet-bagger, see?"

"No, I don't."

"You will, when I've larned 'ee. Captain Columbus were allers ready for a lark, same as I be. One marning he up and says to the King o' Spain——"

"Ah-h-h! I knows. Him as married Queen Victory's grandarter."

"You knows less than a tomtit. I be talkin' o' they ancient days afore you was born to ask silly questions. Captain up and says: 'I be sick to my stummick wi' this rampagious old world, and 'tis my intention to find a new 'un.' Wi' that, he packs his carpet-bag and sails away till he comes to Ameriky, where he crowns hisself President o' the United States."

"Well, I never——!"

"Aye, I bain't going to teach you any more history, granfer, but you knows now what a carpet-bagger means, just a feller as settles in another

country and thinks he owns it. That be old Bostock. I helped beat his covers one day, and, dang me, if he bain't a potter o' bunnies setting——!"

"His darter be a fine young 'ooman."

"Ah-h-h. I knows one young man o' your way o' thinking."

At this point Uncle buried his handsome nose in his tankard. Then he paid his reckoning and walked home. As he walked his thoughts dwelt persistently upon young Harry Culverley.

Next to Lionel Pomfret, the only son of Uncle's beloved landlord, came Harry Culverley in Habakkuk Mucklow's affections. The Culverleys were true Foresters, who scorned carpet-baggers. Harry's father had been Master of the Buckhounds; and Harry himself had been "blooded" to deer and fox before he was seven! Indeed, he knew the Forest almost as well as Uncle himself. Culverley lay fifteen miles away, beyond Brankenford, and nearly as far from the property recently bought by Thomas Bostock.

Uncle was well aware, of course, that money was scarce at Culverley. It had been scarce before the war. Two parlour-maids had replaced butler and footman when Master Harry became a Hussar. With the income tax at five shillings in the pound, one of the parlour-maids betook herself to the nearest munition works; and the loose boxes held just two hunters instead of half a dozen. This was tragedy to Uncle. And he had wit enough to realise that matters financial were likely to be worse instead of better.

At this moment Chloe Bostock appeared in the hunting-field. Now Uncle, as a harbourer of deer, had trained a sharp pair of eyes to observe trifles which ordinarily escape observation. Women take to hunting for many reasons. But, quite obviously, Chloe hunted because she loved it. The same could be said of Harry Culverley. Each came out to watch hounds at work and to stick to them when they hit the right line. No "coffee-housing", or what Uncle called "mum-budgetting", for them. Moreover, Chloe was a V.A.D. in a local hospital, and only able to hunt once a week. Harry Culverley, home on sick leave, hunted regularly.

Chloe Bostock captured Uncle unconditionally, bewitching him with horsemanship and pleasant, unaffected manners. It annoyed Uncle, however, to see that she was better mounted than Harry, but this annoyance vanished when the compensating thought suddenly came to him that Providence had sent the carpet-bagger to the Forest with the special design of rebuilding anew the ancient House of Culverley. From the moment when he overheard Harry telling Chloe the names of the more remarkable hounds, Uncle decided swiftly that here was an obvious match of heaven's own making.

But how to bring about so desirable a consummation puzzled him. Once before he had boldly dared to suggest a rich marriage to Master Harry. At Easter, when hard-riding swells come to the Forest to finish the season, Uncle had "marked down" a young

lady said to be worth a "plum" as the future Mrs. Harry Culverley. She, too, rode dashingly, a true lover of the game. And Uncle, you may be sure, noticed quickly that her eyes lingered upon the Hussar. Alone with Harry, and knowing that he was regarded as a privileged character, he had said outright:

"I'd like to see 'ee master of Hounds, Master Harry; yas, I would."

"All right, Uncle. You find the cash and I'll do the rest."

"Will 'ee?"

"Rather."

Uncle winked solemnly.

"That there Miss Judkins be worth a hundred thousand, so they tells me."

Harry laughed and shook his head. Uncle went on:

"I knows what you be thinkin' of—her long, sharp nose, which do, seemingly, come round carner afore her face, but, Lard love 'ee, you'd be lookin' at your hounds a week after marriage, not at her nose."

Harry went on laughing and shaking his head.

But Chloe's nose was neither long nor sharp. And Uncle noticed that Harry looked at it, when he might have been looking at hounds. Chloe's nose had a skyward tilt to it, an additional reason for following it.

By this time Uncle had divined that the Captain of Hussars was bashful with maids!

And his sick leave would soon be up.

If they could be left alone together——

But this was difficult of accomplishment. Lady Cynthia Culverley, Harry's mother, had not yet called upon Mrs. Bostock, partly because the Culverley car was jacked up in war time, and partly also because Lady Cynthia was slow to make new acquaintances. General Culverley happened, moreover, to be a Tory; Thomas Bostock was a Radical and a democrat. The young couple, in ordinary times, might have met at balls, on the golf links, or at the houses of common friends.

Fate ordained that they should never see each other except in the hunting-field.

Upon the Friday before Christmas Day the buckhounds met not far from Nether-Applewhite. Uncle watched the young couple.

Harry, as usual, engaged the hunt servants in talk. Chloe was surrounded by middle-aged and elderly men, who were more than eager to pay attention to a young lady whose father's cellar held '99 Clicquot and Napoleon brandy. Harry—so Uncle noted—glanced at Chloe from time to time out of the corner of an ardent eye. Presently he spoke genially to Uncle, and asked him how he did.

"I be hearty as never was, Master Harry. I hopes you bain't mendin' too quick, sir."

"Ten days more," said Harry.

Uncle reflected hopefully that much might be accomplished in ten days. Unhappily, man and maid were not likely to meet more than twice during that time, inasmuch as Chloe only hunted once a week.

Uncle looked Harry straight in the face, as he observed critically:

" 'Tis a rare bit o' 'orseflesh as Miss Bostock be ridin'?" He added slyly, as Harry nodded: " Be-utiful pair, I says, in my everyday way." Harry nodded again; Uncle sighed before he spoke the last word: " 'Twould be a sad mishap, Master Harry, if so be as they found theirselves bogged."

" Awful," Harry admitted, as he tightened a girth.

Master and tufters jogged off to the enclosure, where a notable buck had been harboured. Harry, to Uncle's disgust, went with them. Chloe and her elderly cavaliers remained with the pack. Tufting, which precedes the regular hunting, presents rare opportunities for love-making, as Uncle was well aware. After the pack was laid on, if the scent happened to be good, undivided attention must be given to the chase. After the hunt man and maid would go different ways. Uncle shook his head as his active mind dwelt upon these things.

The tuft lasted well over an hour. Meanwhile Uncle had exchanged a few sentences with Miss Bostock. Seeing that her mare was inclined to be restive, he asked permission to adjust the curb-chain. Chloe smiled upon him sweetly.

" Scent 'll hold in the heather," Uncle informed her, " and 'tis a gert buck, miss. I knows 'un well. And, wi' this wind, he'll take the line he did las' year, when he diddled 'em so handsome in Winefields. Do 'ee know the country about Basleys', miss?"

"Not very well, Mr. Mucklow."

"Ah-h-h! 'Tis bad goin' as never was, ruts an' rabbit 'oles, and a narsty bit o' bog, too."

Chloe laughed.

"You cruel man! Are you trying to frighten me?"

"I knows you bain't one to be afeared, miss. But I makes bold to tell 'ee to foller a good man to-day. Major Hall, he knows the Forest better nor most."

"Major Hall knows it much too well," replied Chloe sharply.

Uncle grinned. He was expecting this affirmation. The gallant major, once a thruster, had begun to ride too canny to please a dashing horsewoman. Uncle muttered deprecatingly:

"Aye, that be so. And, as for Master, he can't abide to have ladies a'ridin' in his pocket."

"Of course, I know that," said Chloe.

Uncle allowed his eyes to wander in the direction of the elderly cavaliers.

"I dunno as any o' they 'ud do, miss."

Chloe laughed, touched by Uncle's obvious solicitude, but quite unconscious of his objectives. Then the bolt fell.

"I must trust to luck and my mare," she said hopefully. "This will be my last day for six weeks."

Uncle stared at her, agape with consternation. She continued blithely:

"I'm taking on a job away from home, to relieve a friend. It's hard lines, because my horse is just in condition, but there it is. Duty first, Mr. Mucklow."

"Aye, miss, I be an upholder o' duty allers, but a bit o' pleasure be the sweeter, I says, atween jobs."

Chloe commented upon this, but Uncle was not listening. All his faculties were now concentrated upon making his "point", regardless of where the notable buck might elect to go. Intuition told him that the maid was ripe as the man for the marriage state. To bring them together, in spite of obstacles, fired his wits. Given the happy opportunity, each would rise adequately to it. He slapped his thigh, as he exclaimed:

"Dang me, if I bain't a fool!"

"Oh, Mr. Mucklow——"

Uncle said solemnly:

"Yas; I'd forgotten Captain Culverley."

As the name fell from his lips, Chloe's cheeks displayed a deeper tinge of pink. Nobody but uncle would have noticed it. Very thoughtfully he gazed at the landscape, as he continued:

"Captain, he be safe for 'ee to foller, a kind young gentleman, and a rare lover of a hound. Allers to right or left of 'en, he be, accordin' to wind. Ah-h-h! I see Alferd a-comin' for the pack."

A whip galloped up. Hounds were uncoupled as the Master approached leisurely with his faithful tuf-ters. Harry rode beside him. Uncle began to man-œuvre for position. He intended to let Master Harry know that Miss Bostock was leaving home, but, alas, this good intention was frustrated by the other men, keen to learn from an eye witness what had happened to the buck. Harry spoke in a loud, clear voice which

Uncle overheard, and so did Miss Bostock. The buck had been excellently tufted; he had broken cover a few minutes previously, and was last seen heading for Basleys'. Plenty of scent, and all conditions favourable for a gallop.

Seeing that quiet speech with Master Harry was unachievable, Uncle slipped across the heather to Miss Chloe.

"I heard," she said pleasantly. "It's Basleys'—ruts, rabbit-holes, and a nasty bit of bog."

"May the Lard presarve 'eel!"

"Amen to that, Mr. Mucklow."

"All the same, miss, do 'ee stick tight as wax to young Captain, and then, maybe, you'll ha' the hunt o' the season. I knows what I knows."

"And you don't tell all you know either. I'm much obliged to you."

Uncle's face appeared to be as innocent as that of Moses when he lay amongst the bulrushes. And yet, at the moment, he was contemplating treachery. A word from him might steer the maid into a bog from which, of course, a gallant Hussar would be constrained to rescue her. If hounds ran fast, as they were almost certain to do, two followers would be left behind. Abandoned by Diana, a kindlier goddess would take them in charge. Against this bristled the probability that a hard-riding young fellow, with eyes upon hounds and ruts, might, unwittingly, gallop on ahead, leaving the maid to be extricated by the elderly and middle-aged.

The Master trotted off with the pack; the field followed. Uncle took his own line, hoping to nick in later. He knew every stream and gutter where the buck would "soil"; and if hounds checked, as was inevitable, and if the buck did not go perfectly straight, as was likely, Habakkuk Mucklow might be in at the finish.

Before the pack was laid on at the point where the buck left the enclosure, Harry and Chloe exchanged demure greetings, but pride prevented her from asking him to pilot her. Nor did she tell him that he would not meet her in the hunting-field again before he returned to France. Nevertheless, V.A.D. work presented a peg upon which Harry hung this remark:

"If they wing me, Miss Bostock, I should like to be nursed by you."

At that moment hounds hit the line with such a crash that further talk became impossible. The buck had fifteen minutes' start, a fact of which the leading hounds seemed to be well aware, for they raced over the heather at a pace much too hot to last. As the wind blew from the south-easterly quarter, Harry rode slightly to the left. Chloe followed at a discreet distance. As she rode she reflected comfortably that her pilot was in the cavalry, and not very likely to find himself in need of a nurse. But he had been wounded once. The thought of this obsessed her. She might never see his face again. On account of that she looked the harder at his straight back, as she touched her

mare with the spur. An open stretch of heather invited her to gallop up abreast of Harry's bay. When he saw her he shouted:

"We're in for a good thing."

She glanced over her shoulder. The elderly and middle-aged were far astern. Hounds were together and running fast and mute. Basleys', with its terrors, lay just ahead. Chloe wondered whether solicitude for her safety would concern Captain Culverley. If he cared, surely he would say—something.

He did.

"'Ware bog!"

He picked his way across the treacherous ground and she followed.

"'Ware rabbit-holes and ruts!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when his horse pecked badly, recovered, and plunged into a second row of deep ruts. The bay's nose scraped the heather, but Harry refused to leave his conveyance. Chloe was much impressed. Her mare picked her way cleverly, till they came to better ground.

At Hockens' Water hounds checked for five minutes, and the stragglers came up. Harry, intent upon hound-work, said nothing to Chloe, somewhat to her mortification. Sorely was she tempted to tell him that this might be her last hunt that season. Was he too keen a sportsman? She held the question in abeyance. Others had told her that he was a keen soldier, but he hated to talk "shop".

A note from the Master's horn and they were off

again, through an enclosure and on to the plain beyond, where the galloping was sound. Again and again Harry glanced behind him, with an unmistakable expression upon his face. He wanted her. And she wanted him! Nothing else mattered. He was pursuing a stout buck; she was pursuing a quarry quite as likely to escape. But she didn't try to overtake her Hussar, although she was better mounted and the mare straining at her bridle.

The line bore to the left. The buck seemed to disdain the woodlands. A man in a cart had viewed him heading for Ockley. Probably he would soil again where the Ockley road crossed the water. And here, sure enough, hounds checked for the second time, but not for long.

"Farrard! Farrard!"

"There he is," said Harry.

Chloe could just see the buck leisurely trotting up a distant slope. He carried himself gallantly, with no sign of fatigue or stress. A moment later he disappeared.

The pack raced into an enclosure and into fresh deer. Older and more reliable hounds hung back, not owning the fresh scent; young hounds had to be stopped—no easy matter in thick woods. The Master needed Harry's help; Chloe nibbled at a piece of cake. After an exasperating delay the true line was found, but the scent failed noticeably. And the followers were obliged to stick to the rides, relying upon ears instead of eyes to "locate" hounds. Harry hesitated,

hearing nothing. The Master galloped down a ride to the right.

"Can you hear anything?" asked Harry of Chloe. She shook her head.

He laid before her two plans. Ever since the pack had been laid on, the buck had consistently moved up wind and to the left. A year ago he had run much the same line and tricked the field in Winefields. Probably he was repeating successful tactics. And in Winefields he would be sure to find fresh deer again.

Finally Harry decided to bear to the left, although the Master had chosen the right. They galloped on, pausing frequently to listen, but hearing nothing.

"They run confoundedly mute," said Harry testily.

"And so do you," thought Chloe.

Five minutes later they debouched upon a road.

"I see Habakkuk Mucklow," said Chloe.

"Good biz! Uncle will know where they are."

Uncle, a bit breathless from his exertions, did know. Hounds, according to this expert, were running right-handed. He had seen them and heard them.

"I hear 'un now," he added, with his hand to his ear.

"I'm hanged if I do," said Harry. "Are you quite sure, Uncle?"

"I be sartain sure that I knows where they be this instant minute, Master Harry. You has no time to lose, seemin'ly. Gallop down road a bit, and then

across to Rinton toll-bar. Hounds'll check at the water. Like as not you'll kill near Brackenford. Good luck to 'ee! I be fair beat, I be."

Harry handed him a shining half-crown before he cantered on down the road.

"We shall be all right," he told Chloe.

Uncle spat upon the half-crown before he transferred it to his breeches pocket. As he did so he smiled knowingly. Then he began to retrace his steps to Nether-Applewhite, where good ale awaited him.

Harry and Chloe rode on alone till they came to Rinton toll-bar. Travellers going and coming along the Cronmouth road had heard neither hounds nor horn. Harry was quite unable to dissemble his disappointment. Obviously they were hopelessly out of it, out of a clinking run, perhaps the run of the season. Chloe, with some knowledge of the male temperament, suggested sandwiches and a nip from the flask.

"Let's make the best of it," she suggested.

"But my leave is nearly up, Miss Bostock."

"Mine is up," she replied tranquilly.

"What——"

His surprise was complimentary. Chloe explained. Then she said demurely:

"I had better be moving home. Good-bye, Captain Culverley, and good luck!"

"Do you know the way?"

"Y-es."

"The short cut, I mean?"

"N-n-o."

"I'll show you."

Once more they took to the woodlands, to Arcadia, which, even in winter, presents allurements. Side by side, in silence, they rode slowly down a lovely glade, treading softly upon deep moss. The sandwiches, so Chloe noticed, were forgotten, but a nip was taken from the flask. Harry said briskly:

"We'll not hurry on account of the gees."

Having said this, he had the grace to blush a little. Chloe patted her horse's neck. Harry essayed another flight of fancy.

"If it hadn't been for me, you'd have followed the Master."

"Why talk about that? What is—is."

By this time they were nearing the point where they had left Uncle. And here, by the luck of things, they met a forest-keeper, who made a positively astounding declaration. Buck, and hounds, and a few followers had passed him within the hour, and the buck was running in exactly the opposite direction to that indicated by Uncle. He had kept on his self-appointed course to the left, disdaining Winefields, his former sanctuary. At first Harry refused to believe this, so great was his faith in Uncle. Corroborative detail, however, was forthcoming from the lips of another wayfarer.

Alone once more with Chloe, Harry cursed Uncle as heartily as the Lord Archbishop of Rheims cursed the little jackdaw. Chloe defended Mr. Mucklow. She said warmly:

"He wanted us to have a good run; he was ever so keen; and he told me to stick tight to you."

"Did he?"

"And he knew that this would be my last hunt for ever so long."

"Oh! He knew that, too!"

"He will be terribly upset when he finds out that he directed us wrong."

Harry said more cheerfully:

"Poor old Uncle! Yes, you are right. He wished us well. At the meet he spoke to me about you. Very complimentary he was, too."

"What ever did he say?"

"He seemed to have just discovered what I found out the first day I saw you."

"And what was that?"

"Your—beauty."

Being a plunger, Harry should have followed up this opening, but he didn't. It is possible that Chloe liked him the better because, obviously, he had not practised the arts of the carpet knight. To make quite sure of this she said softly:

"I suppose paying compliments is part of the cavalry course?"

Harry laughed as he whispered confidentially:

"I'll tell you something. It's a secret between us. In our mess I'm dead lag of the compliment class. I wish I wasn't. I should like to turn myself loose, here and now. The rummy thing is that I could tell your

mare to her face just what I think of her, point by point, but I couldn't do that with you."

"Why not? It would amuse me to hear a good judge of a horse tell off myself, point by point, compliments barred."

Harry looked her over. He realised that he was challenged. .

"All right," he said. "I'll have a go at it. If I take a bad toss and hurt myself——"

"It will be my duty to nurse you," she added.

"Very good bone," he began.

"But not quite the right blood," she said gravely.

Poor Harry flushed crimson. He had heard this cruel criticism from his father and others. Chloe laughed reassuringly:

"I put that in unkindly, Captain Culverley. I overheard Major Hall speak of me as a nice little filly, but rather hairy at the heel. As a matter of fact, I am proud of the fact that my grandfather rose from the ranks."

"I should like to punch old Hall's head," said Harry.

"Go on! With my points, I mean. I promise not to interrupt again."

"You carry your head like a blood 'un; splendid feet and fetlocks; just the right shoulder, not too long in the back, well ribbed up, sound from tip to toe, and a grand mover. There you are! "

"Thanks."

"Quiet in single harness, I take it? "

Chloe exhibited slight confusion. Harry continued:

"Bidding ought to be brisk when you come up." As she remained silent, he leant nearer to her, whispering: "I say, has there been much bidding?"

She answered almost inaudibly:

"Not from the right bidders."

Harry had never craned at a stiff fence. As a rule he leapt first and looked afterwards.

"Am I the right sort of bidder?" he asked.

Chloe might have temporised; in pre-war times, doubtless, she would have played her fish a little longer; but his eyes looked into hers with a tenderness and sincerity which exacted as much from her.

"Yes," she answered.

II

Meanwhile, Uncle, contrary to custom, was slowly walking back to Nether-Applewhite. As a rule, knowing everybody, he asked (and got) a "lift" home, after he had cooled himself down in some convenient tavern. More, he deliberately chose the longer route, which happened to pass the property belonging to Mr. Bostock. It was likely, therefore, that Miss Chloe would overtake him on the road, and the thought of this so enlivened Uncle that he sang snatches of song as he plodded along the muddy ways, frequently pausing to look back and listen.

Presently, he reached a spot where roads branched,

and here he sat down in the lee of the hedge to smoke a contemplative pipe.

As he smoked, his sharp ears caught the sound of voices. Uncle peered over the hedge, and beheld Harry and Chloe approaching. They rode upon the soft turf which bordered the highway.

Uncle bobbed down behind the hedge, and put his horny hand over the bowl of his pipe. A broad grin embellished his jovial countenance. He had noticed that Harry's arm encircled Chloe's waist!

At the branching roads the lovers parted. Uncle crawled along the fence and overheard the last words.

"I shall see your father to-morrow morning."

"I shall whisper something to him to-night."

They laughed, glanced about them, and kissed.

"Good night, you little witch!"

"Good night, Harry. Be sure to dream of me!"

"That's a sitter."

Chloe trotted on. Harry watched her till she was out of sight. Uncle ran swiftly along the fence, cut across a field, and five minutes later encountered Harry face to face. Harry reined up.

"Uncle, you silly old man, I've a bone to pick with you."

"Have 'ec, Master Harry?"

"You misdirected us, b' Jove—you! We lost hounds; never saw or heard 'em again."

"Well, I never!"

"And you were so positive that you knew where they were."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I be gettin' a very old man. And so tired, too, as never was. Misdirected 'ee? That be tarr'ble—tarr'ble."

He sighed deeply, looking so miserable that Harry's kind heart melted within him. Uncle added the last touch.

"I lost hounds, too, Master Harry."

"You look as if you'd lost your wife. Cheer up! Sometimes, old chap, wrong is right and right is wrong. Here's half a thick un for you."

Half-a-sovereign joined half-a-crown in Uncle's pocket. He thanked the donor becomingly, addingslyly:

"What be you doing, Master Harry, so far from Culverley?"

Harry reddened as he answered hastily:

"Miss Bostock was not sure of her road home. I went with her as far as the cross-roads yonder."

"Ah-h-h! A be-utiful young lady, to my notion, a gert pleasure to serve she, I reckon. 'Tis too bad she was thrown out along o' my ignerunce. Be she much miffed wi' me, Master Harry?"

"Not she, Uncle. She stuck up for you stoutly. Mistakes will happen. Good night, and a Merry Christmas."

He cantered on.

It was late that evening when Uncle strode into his cottage, and Jane, his wife, received him sourly, knowing that he had declined a remunerative job of work to "traipse", as she termed it, after a lot of dirty dogs. Uncle handed her the half-crown:

"You take that, my girl. 'Tis money well earned."

He discreetly kept silence about the half-sovereign.

Jane took the half-crown, saying dourly:

"Who gave it to 'ee?"

"Young Squire Culverley. Him and Miss Bostock lost hounds, and I happened along just then, and put 'un right."

Jane sniffed.

"Right——! It be wrong to hunt in war-time, I says."

Uncle smiled upon her.

"Such matters, old dear, be too high for 'ee. Me and the Dook o' Wellington carries the same mind about that. Huntin' be the backbone of Old England. And I'll tell 'ee summat else. Right be wrong sometimes, and wrong be right."

"What a tale!"

"Aye. There's a mort o' things for 'ee to learn, Jane. Now, you get supper, my girl, and thank the Lard that you be married to a very forcible, understanding man."

Jane sniffed again, remarking sharply:

"Was you in at the finish, Habakkuk?"

"Was I in?" repeated Uncle scornfully. "We had the run of our lives, old dear, and if 'ee don't believe me, you ax Miss Bostock."

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